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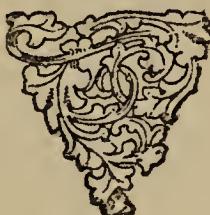
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THE STUDENT'S CHURCH HISTORY

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Author of "The Student's Catholic Doctrine,"
"Manual of Bible History," etc.



VOL. I.
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PREFACE

IF Philosophy is the handmaid of Theology, surely the History of the Church is not merely the handmaid, but the sister, of the History of the Old and of the New Testament. The three form such a natural sequence that not one of them can be regarded as a subject apart, but only as a necessary complement of the other two. It was this thought that induced the writer to add to his Manuals of Bible History of the Old and of the New Testament a History of the Church, in the hope that it might serve a useful purpose to the student of history, and prove a source of interest to the reader in search of knowledge.

In following the history of God's people as recorded in the Books of the Old Testament, one cannot but be struck by the fact that the events therein described happened to the Jews "by way of figure," and that the main purpose for which they were written was to call attention to the coming of Christ, and to bear witness to Him as the Saviour of our fallen and sinful race, as well as to foreshadow the Church that was to be—that is, the people of God throughout the nations. In the Old Testament, as St Augustine points out, the New lies hidden, and in the New the Old lies open; hence, that which in very truth is the sum of the New Testament, namely, Christ and His Church, is also the sum of the Old;—a truth beautifully reflected in the words of St Paul: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to-day; and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

And how truly does it follow that the Religion of Christ goes back to the beginning of the world, as it is destined to continue till the end of time! "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). We seem to hear the words of Christ, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John xii. 32), and to see the Cross raised aloft with its precious burden, shedding its salutary rays to the beginning and to the end of time; for all the sacrifices of the Old Law were but figures of the One Sacrifice of the New Law and drew their virtue from it. It was by their sorrow for sin, and belief and hope in the coming of the Messias, that the Israelites of old were justified, and not by the sanctifying power of their sacrifices in themselves. Even the unbloody sacrifices were but so many types and figures of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Eucharist. And just as Religion is Catholic or Universal, embracing as it does all times and places, so too is the Church.

Our task now is to trace the history of the Catholic Church, that society to which the true Religion was confided, from the Ascension of our Lord right on to our own day, a task fraught with the utmost difficulty when we consider the vastness and the importance of the subject to be treated. As it would be impossible to bring

PREFACE

such a mighty work within the compass of the three small volumes contemplated, it remains for us to review the particular facts which mark the progress of the Church's history, and from these to make a judicious choice according to their importance. Without sacrificing what is essential, we must see to it that the work, though brief, is so far complete.

This volume gives us the history of the early period of the Church, from the time of the Ascension of Christ to the Edict of Milan (313). On Pentecost Day we see the Apostles with their small band of the faithful issue from the upper room to enter upon the work assigned to them by their Divine Master, the work of "preaching the Gospel to every creature." Soon we find the infant Church the object of the most cruel persecution, but, as Tertullian averred, the blood of the martyrs was her seed. Though at times forced to seek shelter and protection in the Catacombs, she at length came forth triumphant over an idolatrous and pleasure-loving world. We see her converts in the villas of the great Roman nobles, in the courts of the Caesars, and at length seated on the Emperor's throne. Even before the middle of the third century, Tertullian could say: "We are but of yesterday; and we fill your cities, islands, castles, and councils; your army, your palaces, and your senate. We have left you only your temples."

If time and opportunity permit, and the courage of the author can rise to the great occasion, it is his intention to carry the history down to our own day, that is, to the end of the year 1929. This year must ever stand out as a great landmark in the history of the Church. The restoration of the Temporal Power of the Papacy guaranteed by the Vatican Treaty, the Golden Jubilee of the Pontiff's Episcopate, and, in our own country, the Centenary of Catholic Emancipation which, throughout the land, has called forth a burst of universal joy—culminating in such a religious outpouring of gratitude to God as was witnessed at Liverpool and Westminster—make the year 1929 an *annus mirabilis* indeed.

SACRED HEART PRESBYTERY,
GOSFORTH PARK,
Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, 1929.

THE STUDENT'S CHURCH HISTORY

PART I

FROM THE APOSTOLIC AGE TO THE EDICT
OF MILAN, A.D. 313

CHAPTER I

*FROM THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD TO THE CON-
VERSION OF ST PAUL*

JESUS CHRIST our Lord, the Head of the Catholic Church, had gathered around Him in Palestine a little band of followers, which, without losing its unity, was destined to spread abroad and carry the Gospel tidings throughout the whole world ; and in order to maintain this unity and union in the Church, He had appointed St Peter to be its visible representative on earth.

At the time of Christ's Ascension, the Church which He had come on earth to establish comprised upwards of six hundred souls, of whom some five hundred were to be found in Galilee, as we gather from St Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (xv. 6). Their spiritual care, as we have seen, was left to St Peter and the other Apostles. Thus we see planted the cedar-twig of Christ's Church upon earth, spoken of by the prophet Ezechiel, which was destined to shoot forth such branches that to its shelter all the nations of the earth should flock for protection and salvation : " I Myself will take of the marrow of the high cedar, saith the Lord God ; and will set it : I will crop off a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent. On the high mountains of Israel will I plant it, and it shall shoot forth into branches, and shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar ; and all birds shall dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof " (Ezech. xvii. 22, 23).

The disciples of our Lord who, on Ascension Day, had followed Him to the Mount of Olives and had been witnesses of His glorious ascent into heaven, returned to Jerusalem and retired to an upper room, there to prepare for the coming of the Holy Ghost whom He had promised to send them. The number of Christ's followers thus gathered together in Jerusalem was about a hundred and twenty, and included Mary, His mother.

Now while they were gathered there, Peter, as chief of the Apostles and in virtue of the supremacy conferred upon him by his Divine Master, stood up in their midst, and invited them to fill the place

which had become vacant by the fall of Judas. Their choice was to be made from among those who had been with them from the baptism of John, and who had been witnesses with them of the Resurrection. Two were at first selected, Joseph, surnamed the Just, and Matthias ; but the final choice was decided by lot after recourse had been had to prayer for Divine guidance. The lot fell upon Matthias, who was now numbered with the other Apostles.

Ten days after our Lord's Ascension was the great Feast of Pentecost, which brought to Jerusalem Jews from nations the most remote, even from distant Rome. While the disciples and the holy women were assembled together in the upper room as usual, there suddenly came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, which filled the whole house in which they were sitting, and there appeared, as it were, cloven tongues of fire resting upon each one of them. Immediately all were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in different tongues according as the Holy Ghost inspired them to speak. No longer timid and shrinking from danger, the Apostles fearlessly went forth to announce the Word of God. When word of what had come to pass was noised through the city, men flocked together to satisfy themselves about the reality of what they had been told. Then it was that Peter, taking advantage of the opportunity thus offered, began to preach the Crucified One, declaring that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had put to death, and whose Resurrection was but the fulfilment of David's prophecy (Ps. xv. 10), was indeed the Christ, their Lord. The result of this, St Peter's first discourse, was the conversion of 3,000 souls.

Not long after this event, when Peter and John had gone up to the Temple to pray, they found there a man who had been lame from his birth. To his entreaty for an alms Peter said : " Silver and gold I have none ; but what I have I give thee : in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk ! " The man rose up, and with the Apostles went into the Temple, praising and thanking God. The people were struck with amazement at the miracle, and in great numbers followed Peter and John. Peter again saw his opportunity ; and in the Temple publicly preached Him in whose name the miracle had been wrought. On this occasion as many as 5,000 new converts were added to the Church. But the priests, enraged at Peter's success, caused the two Apostles to be seized and taken into custody.

The next morning Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the Jews, and asked by what power and in whose name they had healed the lame man. " Be it known unto you," said Peter, " and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here whole." The council, afraid of the people by reason of the impression made upon them by the miracle, could do nothing but threaten punishment, and commanded the Apostles, before dismissing them, to speak no more of Jesus of Nazareth. To this they answered : " We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" ;

and asked if it was reasonable and just to hearken to men rather than to God.

Both they and the other Apostles continued to announce the good tidings of the Gospel and to make many converts ; but when the priests and the Sadducees saw their warning disregarded and converts to the new faith daily multiplying, they laid hands on them and cast them into the common prison. But an angel opened their prison door during the night and set them free, bidding them go and preach the Word of Life in the Temple.

Fear of a tumult prevented the use of open violence, and an officer was sent to summon the Apostles before the Sanhedrim, but was cautioned not to use force. The council would have voted the death of the Apostles immediately had it not been for the wise words of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and doctor of the Law. "Meddle not with these men," he said, "for if this be the work of men only, it will soon fall to nothing ; but if it be from God, you cannot hinder it, and you will only make yourselves guilty by resisting the designs of God." This wise counsel had its effect. The Apostles were indeed scourged, but were dismissed with the caution never again to speak in the name of Jesus. They went from the council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for Christ's sake ; yet they continued to teach and preach daily in the Temple, and from house to house, faith in Jesus Christ.

As the number of converts increased, the greater became the difficulty of distributing the common stock, when, to free themselves from a burden which could be equally well performed by others, and which took up much time that might be more profitably spent in teaching and preaching, the Apostles caused seven men to be chosen, full of the Spirit of God and wisdom, and prayed over them, and laid hands upon them. Here we have the institution of deacons. The names of the seven were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas. They were, however, ordained for a sacred ministry, and not merely to manage the common stock belonging to the faithful. St Stephen and St Philip preached the Gospel immediately, and baptised those that were converted.

Stephen performed great wonders and miracles among the people, and none were able to resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. His zeal raised up against him many enemies, who brought him before the Sanhedrim and produced false witnesses to swear that he had spoken against the Temple and the Law, and had blasphemed against God and Moses. As Stephen stood in the midst of the assembly, his face appeared to those who looked upon him as the face of an angel. Gazing up to heaven he exclaimed with rapture : "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." His accusers gnashed their teeth with rage ; they stopped their ears so as not to hear his supposed blasphemy ; and rushing upon him, they hurried him out of the city to stone him to death. They who stoned him laid their garments at the feet of a man named Saul, who, doubtless through Stephen's

prayers, became later the great St Paul. With prayers of forgiveness for his persecutors on his lips Stephen fell asleep in the Lord.

Now there began a persecution of the Christians, which, far from uprooting Christianity, served but to propagate it the more. Such as could not conceal themselves in the city dispersed throughout Judaea and Samaria, or fled into different countries, carrying with them the light of the Gospel wherever they went. Thus it was that the people of Samaria were instructed in the faith by St Philip, one of the seven deacons.

In Samaria at this time was a man named Simon, a noted magician who believed, or pretended to believe, and was baptised like the rest of those who were converted by Philip's preaching. When the Apostles at Jerusalem heard that the Word of God had been preached to the Samaritans, they sent Peter and John to confer on them the Sacrament of Confirmation by prayer and the imposition of hands. Seeing the wonderful effects which followed the imposition of hands by the Apostles, Simon offered Peter and John money if they would confer their mysterious power on him. Peter, filled with indignation, sternly exclaimed : " May thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the Gift of God may be purchased with money." From that time the name *simony* has ever adhered to the act of buying, selling, or giving money for things spiritual.

The two Apostles returned to Jerusalem, and Philip was directed by an angel to go to the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. Here he saw the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer to the queen of Ethiopia. This man, a Jewish proselyte or convert, was reading from the prophet Isaias, in a voice sufficiently loud to be heard, as he rode along in his chariot. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. " How can I," replied the man, " unless someone show me ? " and at the same time he expressed a desire for Philip to mount the chariot and sit beside him. Philip did so ; and it came about that his explanation of the prophet's words, and their application to the Messias, resulted in the conversion and baptism of the eunuch. Philip was next seen at Azotus, whence he passed, preaching and teaching in the cities of Philistia as far as Caesarea.

The dying prayer of St Stephen for his persecutors was soon to have its effect in the conversion of their leader, Saul : " And Saul was consenting to his death." Saul was a Jew born at Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor, " brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the truth of the Law of the fathers ; as to the Law a Pharisee, as to zeal persecuting the Church of God " (Acts xxiii. ; Phil. iii.).

His fury against the infant Church was unrelenting. Even after the faithful had fled from Jerusalem before the storm of persecution, Saul was not satisfied, but went to the High Priest for letters to the synagogues at Damascus authorising him to bring back to Jerusalem any men or women whom he might find there professing themselves believers in Christ. As he drew near to Damascus, he was suddenly surrounded by a bright light from heaven ; and falling down on the

ground, he heard a voice calling to him : "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" "Who art Thou, Lord?" Saul asked. The voice replied : "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad." Trembling and astonished, Saul exclaimed : "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Arise," said the Lord to him, "go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." Saul at once arose, only to find that, though his eyes were open, he could not see for the brightness of that light. His comrades led him by the hand to Damascus, where he remained blind for three days, neither eating nor drinking, but rapt in prayer.

There was at this time in Damascus a certain disciple named Ananias, to whom the Lord appeared in a vision and said : "Arise, and go into the street that is called Strait, and seek in the house of Judas one named Saul of Tarsus ; for behold he prayeth." "Lord," answered Ananias, "I have heard from many of this man how great evils he hath done to Thy saints in Jerusalem." The Lord said to him : "Go, for this man is to Me a vessel of election to carry My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel : for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Ananias went ; and entering into the house where Saul was, he laid his hands upon him and said : "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus hath sent me, He who appeared to thee in the way as Thou camest, that thou mayest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Suddenly there fell from the eyes of Saul as it were scales, and he received his sight, and rising up was baptised. Immediately he began to preach in the synagogue of Damascus that Jesus was the Son of God.

Soon he withdrew into Arabia, where he spent three years in retirement, and then returned to Damascus. Here the Jews became violently embittered against him. They even conspired to kill him, and kept watch over the city gates to prevent his escape ; but he was saved by his friends, who let him down by the wall in a basket through the window. In this way he escaped, and went to Jerusalem to see Peter, with whom he remained fifteen days ; but learning that the Jews of Jerusalem sought to seize his person, he withdrew and returned to Tarsus.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL TO THE PERSECUTION UNDER HEROD AGRIPPA

THERE now came to the Church a season of peace and outward calm, during which St Peter visited the different Churches in Palestine. He passed through Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, encouraging the faithful and confirming them in the faith. At Lydda he healed Aeneas who for eight years had been confined to his bed with palsy.

The fame of this miracle spread through Lydda and the plain of Saron, and led to a general conversion of the inhabitants.

Some nine miles to the north-west of Lydda, and situated on the coast, stands the seaport of Joppa, where dwelt a pious woman named Tabitha, or Dorcas. Her death about this time came as a severe blow to the brethren at Joppa, where she was revered for her charity, particularly in caring for and clothing the poor. Peter, having been informed of her death, hastened to her house and was conducted to the upper chamber in which was laid out the dead body awaiting burial. Many poor widows, who were there weeping, pointed, in proof of Tabitha's works of charity, to the many garments which had been made by the labour of her own hands. Peter was moved at the sight and bade them leave the room for a time. He then knelt down, and after a short prayer turned to the corpse and said : "Tabitha, arise." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, sat up ; but Peter, taking her by the hand, raised her from the couch, and presented her alive to her friends. For a time Peter remained at Joppa.

There was in Caesarea, at this time, a centurion named Cornelius, belonging to the Italian cohort, "a religious man, and one that feared God, with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." Cornelius was one day favoured with a vision. An angel appeared to him and said : "Thy prayer and thy alms have ascended for a memorial in the sight of God. And now send men to Joppa to call hither one Simon, who is surnamed Peter : he shall tell thee what thou must do."

On the following day, as the men sent by Cornelius were approaching Joppa, Peter, who had retired to the upper part of the house to pray, was also favoured with a vision. He saw the heavens opened, and, as it were, a great sheet descending, let down by the four corners from heaven to earth ; and looking therein, he saw a great multitude of living creatures, fowls of the air, creeping things of the earth, and four-footed beasts ; and a voice was heard bidding him arise, kill, and eat. Peter answered : "I have never eaten any common or unclean thing." "That which God hath purified," said the voice, "do not thou call common." This strange scene was repeated three times.

While Peter wondered within himself what the meaning of the vision could be, the Spirit of God said to him : "Behold three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, go down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." Peter went down, and asked the men the reason of their coming to him. Being told of Cornelius's vision, he entertained them hospitably that day, and next day set out with them for Caesarea, accompanied by six of the brethren from Joppa. Cornelius went out to meet him, and welcomed him with every mark of respect, at the same time telling him of all that the angel had said. Peter now understood his own vision, and that he had to make known the word of God to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. He therefore announced to Cornelius and to his household the Gospel of the life,

death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of whom the Prophets had given testimony. Even while Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost descended upon Cornelius and his assembled friends, and made known His coming as on the day of Pentecost. Peter, believing that those on whom the Holy Ghost had descended were to be made members of the Church, at once commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

On his return to Jerusalem, Peter silenced the objections of the Jewish converts, who accused him of having had intercourse with the uncircumcised Gentiles, by a simple recital of his vision and of what had happened at the house of Cornelius. They even rejoiced with him, saying : "God hath thus also given to the Gentiles repentance unto life."

By this time the Gospel had been carried not only through Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee, but also to Phoenicia, as well as to Cyprus and Antioch. Indeed, Antioch has well been styled "the cradle and metropolis of Gentile Christianity" ; and it was here, too, that the followers of Christ first received the name of Christians. Tradition has it that St Peter went to Antioch about the year A.D. 40, and that only then did he establish there his Apostolic seat, which he transferred to Rome two years later.

The Christians of Judaea were not destined to enjoy a long repose. Under Herod Agrippa a second persecution broke out against them. He began by putting to death James, the brother of John ; and seeing that this pleased the Jews, he cast Peter also into prison, merely deferring his execution till after the feast of the Pasch. Day and night the faithful had recourse to prayer, and their prayer was heard. The very night before the intended execution, while Peter, bound with chains, was sleeping soundly between two soldiers, a bright light suddenly filled the prison, and an angel of the Lord stood beside Peter, and rousing him from sleep, bade him rise quickly. That instant the chains dropped from Peter's hands ; and after putting on his sandals and girding his garments about him, he followed the angel past the first and the second ward and through the iron gate, which opened of itself, into the street. There the angel immediately disappeared from his sight. Peter at once repaired to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many of the disciples were assembled for prayer.

He knocked at the door ; and when a girl named Rhode came to answer the call and recognised Peter's voice, instead of opening the door at once, she ran back full of joy to tell the glad tidings to the rest. They thought her bereft of her senses ; but when she still affirmed that it was indeed Peter, they whispered : "It is his angel." To Peter's repeated knocks the door was at length opened, and the faithful were transported with joy on seeing him enter. After staying with them a little while, he retired to another place that he might not rashly expose himself to further danger.

Peter's guards were filled with fear and alarm when they found their prisoner gone ; and not without reason, for Herod, after carefully

examining them, disbelieved their story, and had them put to death for their supposed neglect of duty. But punishment was soon to overtake the cruel king. While he was in Caesarea, there came to him messengers from the Tyrians and the Sidonians, and so elated was he by their flattery that his heart swelled with pride, especially when they applauded him and cried out that he spoke as a god, and not as a man. That very instant an angel of the Lord struck him. Seized with a loathsome disease, he was eaten up by worms and expired.

CHAPTER III

APOSTOLIC WORKS AND DEATH OF ST PAUL

WITH the intention of finding an associate who would co-operate with him, Barnabas, who had been sent to Antioch by the Christians at Jerusalem, went to Tarsus in quest of Saul, whither, as we have already seen, he had retired for a while. The two came back to Antioch and laboured there with success about a year. Before entering on their great missionary work among the Gentiles both Saul and Barnabas, although chosen by the Holy Ghost for the ministry, were yet to be ordained and consecrated by men. "Separate Me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have taken them." After receiving the imposition of hands, and thereby probably episcopal ordination, they set off at once to carry the Gospel into regions more remote.

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (A.D. 45-49).—Taking with them John Mark as a subordinate minister, Saul and Barnabas proceeded to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, and thence set sail for Salamis in the east of Cyprus. From Salamis they traversed the island in a westerly direction till they came to the seaport of Paphos, the residence of the Roman Proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who invited them to his residence.

Sergius would have embraced the faith at once had it not been for a Jewish sorcerer named Bar-Jesus, or Elymas, who did all in his power to prevent the Proconsul from accepting it. Saul indignantly rebuked Elymas for his wickedness and said : "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." At that moment Elymas was stricken blind. Filled with awe at the miracle, Sergius, without further delay, expressed his readiness to believe, and embraced the doctrine of Jesus Christ. After this we find the great Apostle of the Gentiles spoken of as Paul, a name which some think was given him out of respect for his illustrious convert, while others are of opinion that the Hebrew name Saul was changed into Paul to make it more acceptable to the Greek and Roman ear ; or was it a name that he had held from the beginning in virtue of his being a Roman citizen ?

From Paphos the three companions set sail for the coast of Pamphilia and came to Perge, a city situated some seven miles from the

coast. It was here that Mark left Paul and Barnabas and took his departure for Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas passed successively to Antioch in Pisidia, to Iconium, and to Lystra. At Lystra Paul healed a man who had been a cripple from his birth ; and the people were so overcome with amazement at what they saw that they believed Paul and Barnabas to be gods in the likeness of men. They would even have offered sacrifice to them forthwith had not Paul and Barnabas, rending their garments in grief, run among them exclaiming : “ O men, why do ye these things ? We also are mortals, men like unto you, preaching to you to be converted from these vain things to the living God.” Soon, however, passing from enthusiasm to the most violent hatred, the people, stirred up by their Jewish persecutors from Antioch and Iconium, were roused to such a pitch of frenzy that they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city for dead. Yet he was soon so far recovered as to be able to enter the city ; and next day he and Barnabas left Lystra for Derbe, where they made many converts.

They had now reached the farthest limit of their proposed journey, and from this point began to retrace their steps through the cities they had previously visited, confirming the souls of their disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith. In each city they chose certain elders ; and when, after enjoining a season of prayer and fasting, they had ordained them priests, they commended the faithful to God. After an absence of probably four years they returned to Antioch in Syria from which city they had at first set out.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM (A.D. 50).—At Antioch a difficulty was raised by many Jewish converts as to whether those who had been converted from paganism to Christianity could be saved unless they were circumcised, and observed the other ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. The point to be resolved was this : Before becoming a Christian was it necessary to become a Jew ? Paul and Barnabas, who vigorously opposed the Jewish converts in these controversies, were deputed, along with Titus and others, to consult the Apostles and the Church of Jerusalem upon the question. So convinced was Paul that the converted Gentiles were not subject to the Jewish Law, that he would not suffer Titus, who had been a Gentile, to be circumcised.

Setting out from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were accompanied on their way by many of the faithful. While in Jerusalem, Paul met for the first time St John, who, with St James and St Peter, happened to be in the Holy City at this very time. Peter, who spoke first in the Council, argued against the ceremonial observances, as also did St James, who as Bishop of Jerusalem, summing up the controversy, added : “ I judge that they who from among the Gentiles are converted to God are not to be disquieted ; but that we write to them that they refrain themselves from the pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”

The discussion was brought to a close by the decree and solemn

decision of the Council pronounced in these words : " It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things : That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ; from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well." The decree regarded only those converts who had been Gentiles. They were not forbidden to use the Jewish ceremonies, but a declaration was made that they were under no obligation to follow the said ceremonies and precepts.

In the prohibitions to abstain from things strangled and from blood, the Church had regard to the particular feelings of the Jews ; the prohibitions, moreover, were only temporary, being designed especially to bring the Jews more easily to admit of the society of the Gentiles. They were to cease with the reasons that gave rise to them.

Letters containing the resolutions of the Council were entrusted to Silas and Judas, who were chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return ; and when the faithful in Antioch had been gathered together, they delivered the letters to them, and also confirmed their contents by word of mouth. The decision was received as the resolve, not of mortal men, but of the Holy Ghost. Silas continued some time at Antioch and gradually identified himself with Paul's little band of followers.

SECOND JOURNEY (A.D. 51-54).—It was not long before Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should revisit the brethren in all the cities wherein they had preached the Word of the Lord. But when Barnabas suggested that John Mark should go with them, Paul would not consent, as he had left them on their former journey. Paul even separated from Barnabas and chose Silas as his companion ; and Barnabas, with John Mark, sailed for Cyprus, his native land.

From Antioch Paul and Silas proceeded by land through Syria and Cilicia, visiting the cities in which Paul had already preached the Word of God, confirming the Churches there, and commanding the precepts of the Apostles and the ancients to be observed. From Cilicia they passed into Lycaonia, and visited once more Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium.

It was at Lystra that Paul met Timothy, a convert of high repute, whom he ordained and associated with himself as disciple and companion during the remainder of this journey. That he might make him more acceptable to the Jews, and thus forward their conversion, Paul circumcised Timothy, who was a Jew on his mother's side. It would have been impossible for Timothy, as an uncircumcised Jew, either to speak in the synagogues or to associate with Jews.

With Silas and Timothy, Paul passed through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia, and eventually came to Alexandria Troas, in the north-west of Asia Minor. Here Paul had a vision. During the night there appeared to him a man of Macedonia beseeching him : " Pass over

into Macedonia and help us." Here, too, they were joined by St Luke, future Evangelist and author of the *Acts*. From Troas they accordingly passed over to Macedonia, and for a time remained at Philippi. Here a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, was converted and baptised, together with her whole family ; and she prevailed on Paul and his companions to remain at her house during their sojourn there.

Trouble, however, was in store for Paul and Silas. On a certain day, as they went to the Proseuche, or Place of Prayer, they met a slave-girl possessed of a divining spirit, who pretended to foretell things to come, and had become a great source of gain to her masters. Grieved for the unhappy creature, Paul turned and said to the spirit : " I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out of her." The evil spirit obeyed him ; but when her masters saw that their source of profit was gone, they caused Paul and Silas to be brought before the magistrates, and accused them of having disturbed the city and of preaching what was not lawful for them as Roman citizens to observe. For this the magistrates had them beaten with rods and cast into prison.

At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and praising God, when suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the city were shaken. The doors were immediately thrown open, and everyone's bonds were loosed. Thinking that the prisoners had made their escape, and expecting to be put to death as being responsible for them, the jailer drew his sword to kill himself. In alarm Paul cried out to him : " Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The poor man called for a light ; then trembling with fear, he cast himself at the feet of Paul and Silas and asked to be instructed in what he was to believe. At daybreak the magistrates sent orders to the jailer to release Paul and Silas ; but when they were told that the men whom they had scourged were Roman citizens, they were filled with dread for their own lives, and hastened to ask pardon of the two prisoners, at the same time urging them to depart quickly from the city.

After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas proceeded through Macedonia, apparently leaving Timothy for a little while, and Luke for a much longer period, to build up the newly founded Church. They directed their journey along the coast to Thessalonica by way of Amphipolis and Apollonia. Finding that their position at Thessalonica had become one of great danger, the brethren sent them away under cover of night to Berea. From Berea they conducted Paul in safety to the nearest seaport (*Dium*), whence he set sail for Athens, leaving word for Silas and Timothy to follow him with all speed.

While awaiting them at Athens, Paul disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and the proselytes, and even before the Areopagus, the supreme and most famous tribunal of ancient Athens, where he was desired to explain himself at greater length. " Ye men of Athens," said Paul, " passing by and seeing your idols, I found an

altar on which was written : TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. What, therefore, you worship without knowing it, this I preach to you." At first they gave him a patient hearing ; but when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, some of them laughed and made a jest of it, while others promised to hear him on this question another time. Dionysius the Areopagite, however, the president of the Council, and later the first bishop of Athens, together with a certain woman named Damaris and others, was converted and believed.

Paul next visited Corinth, where he met with a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who with his wife Priscilla had lately come there from Italy, owing to a decree of the Emperor Claudius banishing all Jews from Rome. They probably owed their conversion to St Peter. At Corinth Paul preached with success, in spite of the bitter opposition of the Jews and the obstacles of every kind which they raised up against him. Protected in his ministry by the Proconsul Gallio, brother of the great philosopher Seneca, he succeeded in forming a community of the faithful which included even the president of the synagogue, Crispus. Among the converts, too, were Erastus, the treasurer of the city, and Caius, who made his house the meeting-place of the Church, and at St Paul's second visit received him as his guest.

From Corinth Paul hurried his course by way of Ephesus to Jerusalem, for the purpose of fulfilling a vow, and returned at length to Antioch after an absence of three years. Aquila and Priscilla came with him as far as Ephesus, and there met a certain Alexandrian Jew named Apollos who had been a disciple of John the Baptist. As Apollos had been but imperfectly instructed in the doctrine of Christ, Aquila and Priscilla expounded to him more exactly the way of the Lord, and recommended him to the Church at Corinth, for which city he was about to set out.

THIRD JOURNEY (A.D. 54-58).—Paul soon decided on making yet a third missionary journey. Again departing from Antioch he went by land through Cilicia, Galatia, and Phrygia to Ephesus.

On his arrival at Ephesus he found there twelve men who had been disciples of John the Baptist ; and when he asked them if they believed in the Holy Ghost, they replied : " We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost." " In what, then, were you baptised ? " asked Paul. " In John's baptism," they answered. " John," said Paul, " baptised the people with the baptism of penance, saying that they should believe in Him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus." At their own request Paul baptised them ; and when he imposed hands upon them, the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and " they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

For two years Paul discoursed daily at Ephesus, and the knowledge of the Christian faith was spread widely around. His testimony was confirmed by many wonderful miracles : " Even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and

the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them."

Some Jewish exorcists, seeing Paul cast out devils by calling upon the name of Jesus, wished to do the same, although they did not believe in Jesus Christ. Among them were the seven sons of Sceva, a chief priest; and when, on one occasion, these men tried thus to cast out a spirit, they were assailed with the words: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then the possessed man leaped upon them, and they were glad to escape naked and wounded from the house, even at the expense of having thus brought ridicule upon themselves. After this, many brought to Paul their books of divination and magic, and burnt them publicly, even though the price of the books amounted to a great sum.

During Paul's stay at Ephesus there arose a great disturbance against him, instigated by one Demetrius, a silversmith and maker of silver models of the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus. Paul's preaching threatened ruin to such men as Demetrius, who pursued a profitable trade in making these portable models of Diana's shrine. By his words Demetrius succeeded in stirring up such frenzy against Paul that the crowd, rushing through the streets with the cry: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," soon had the city in the wildest uproar. Fearing mischief, the chief magistrate hastened to the scene of excitement and had much difficulty in appeasing the people and persuading them to disperse quietly.

Soon after this, Paul called his disciples to him, and exhorting them to perseverance, took leave of them, and set out for Macedonia by way of Troas. He is even thought at this time to have penetrated as far as Illyrium, on the Adriatic. After a stay of three months at Corinth he returned through Macedonia, being joined at Philippi by St Luke, as we gather from the fact that here the narrative is resumed in the first person. Leaving Philippi "we came to Troas in five days, where we stayed seven days."

While Paul and his disciples were assembled at Troas on the eve of his departure "on the first day of the week to break bread," he had continued his discourse till midnight, when a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in one of the windows, overpowered with sleep, fell from the third story and was taken up dead. Paul went down to where the youth lay, and raised him to life, to the joy of the young man's friends. After this miracle Paul celebrated the Sacred Mysteries, and continued discoursing till daybreak, when he took his leave.

From Troas he repaired by various stages to Miletus, to which place the ancients of the Church at Ephesus came to receive his words of farewell. Especially earnest were his exhortations to the bishops: "Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. I know that, after my departure, ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse

things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, keeping in memory that, for three years, I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you night and day. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace." After he had finished speaking, he fell upon his knees and prayed with them for what all believed to be the last time. With tears in their eyes they accompanied him to the ship which was so soon to convey him from their sight.

From this touching leave-taking Paul took the shortest route for Jerusalem. He spent a week in Tyre, and though the faithful would have constrained him to remain with them longer, he continued his journey by way of Ptolemais to Caesarea, where he took up his abode for several days in the house of Philip the deacon, and came at length to Jerusalem near the feast of Pentecost, A.D. 58. With this closes the Third Missionary Journey, the duration of which had been about four years.

PLOT AGAINST PAUL'S LIFE.—While Paul was in the Temple, some Jews from Asia stirred up the people against him, exclaiming, "Men of Israel, help ! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the Law, and this place." The city was soon in an uproar, and a rush was made to the Temple, from which they dragged Paul, and immediately shut the doors. The Roman Tribune Claudius Lysias, with a body of soldiers, hurried to the scene of the disturbance, and was just in time to save Paul from summary execution. As Paul, with the consent of the Tribune, was addressing the people from the steps of fort Antonia, their fury burst out anew : "Away with such a man from the earth," they cried ; "for it is not fit that he should live."

Lysias, believing that Paul must have been guilty of some great offence, took him into the castle for examination, after first giving orders for him to be bound, scourged, and tortured. When they were about to scourge him, Paul calmly asked the centurion in command : "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned ?" The centurion hurried to the Tribune, who came in all haste, and bade him tell if he were indeed a Roman citizen. On learning the truth of Paul's assertion, he was filled with fear because he had caused Paul to be bound ; for the same law which forbade a Roman citizen to be scourged also forbade him to be bound. Next day Lysias, having learnt that the charge against Paul was purely of a religious character, had the Sanhedrim convened and set Paul before them.

The Council was composed both of Pharisees and Sadducees, the latter of whom denied the doctrine of the resurrection, while the former affirmed it, a circumstance which Paul turned to good account by raising such a dissension between the two parties that they were unable to arrive at any decision.

Paul was led back to the citadel ; and, to secure him against the plots of the Jews, was later sent by Lysias to Caesarea, there to be tried before Felix the Governor. Although Felix found no cause

in Paul, yet he kept him a prisoner for two years in the hope of extorting money from him as the price of his release. In the meantime Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus, who, to please the Jews, offered to send Paul back again to Jerusalem ; but, to put an end to further intriguing, Paul appealed to Caesar. There was nothing left for it now but to send him for trial to Rome.

After a stormy passage, the vessel in which Paul eventually sailed, reached Melita (*Malta*) only to be shipwrecked. Paul with the other passengers passed the winter on the island, where he performed a number of miracles, among them being the cure of the father of Publius, the chief man of the island. At length, after a delay of three months, they sailed for Syracuse and Puteoli, and arrived in Rome in the spring of A.D. 61.

For two years Paul remained a captive, guarded by a soldier to whom he was fastened with a chain from the wrist ; yet he was allowed to dwell in his own house. During the time of his captivity he worked zealously for the spread of the Gospel, preaching first to the Jews ; but when he found that his words were lost on the greater number of them, he turned to the Gentiles, saying : “ This salvation is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it.” From his prison, too, he wrote several of his Epistles. During these two years he was much comforted by having in his company, either together or at different times, Luke, Mark, Timothy, Demas and others, together with Aristarchus and Epaphras, who are distinguished as his fellow-prisoners. Here terminates the history of St Paul as contained in the *Acts*.

LAST WORKS, DEATH AND CHARACTER OF ST PAUL.—Paul’s subsequent actions are involved in much obscurity, but to some extent are traceable in his Epistles and in the testimony of certain ancient writers. We learn that, after he had been imprisoned for two years, his trial came on before the Emperor Nero himself, and resulted in his being set at liberty. After his acquittal he seems to have gone to Spain, and later, by way of Macedonia, into Asia Minor. He afterwards visited Crete in company with Titus, whom he left to organise the Church there. He revisited Miletus and Ephesus, at which latter city he left Timothy, and went by way of Philippi to Corinth.

Before the end of the year A.D. 66, he again found himself a prisoner in Rome, by reason of the first general persecution under Nero. This time he was not detained in honourable confinement, but up to the time of his death, was treated as a criminal, St Luke being apparently the only one of his former associates by his side. Tradition has it that, after the burning of Rome, he was ordered to be put to death, and that, on account of his being a Roman citizen, he was beheaded, A.D. 67.

Of all the Apostles—although, as he says of himself, he was “ born out of due time”—St Paul is the best known to us, not only from the account given of him in the *Acts* by his disciple St Luke, but

also from his own numerous Epistles in which the character of the Apostle stands out so clearly.

In a body weak, sickly, and feeble, dwelt an indomitable soul, full of ardent and unwearied zeal: he could exult in his weakness, but was strong in the strength of God: "I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me; for when I am weak then am I powerful" (2 Cor. xii.). In his knowledge of heavenly things his instructor was Christ Himself, from Whom, and not from the Apostles, he received his Apostleship. Four times the Lord appeared to him, and once he was caught up to the third heaven, when he heard words that it was not granted to man to utter. The strength of the Lord indeed dwelt in him, and ever supported him in destitution, in contempt, in afflictions, in persecutions. Speaking of the ten years that immediately preceded his death, he tells us: "Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea" (2 Cor. xi. 24, 25). Yet in the midst of all his sufferings his charity was boundless: "I became all things to all men that I might save all" (1 Cor. ix. 22).

CHAPTER IV

ST PETER

"*I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren*" (LUKE xxiii. 32).

ALTHOUGH St Peter was not the first Apostle to be called by our Lord, yet in the enumeration of the Apostles given us by the different Evangelists we always find Peter's name placed first. Speaking of the Twelve, St Matthew tells us: "The names of the twelve Apostles are these: The first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, etc." (x. 2); and on every occasion when it is a question of one being spokesman for the Twelve, we find Peter acting as their mouthpiece.

From our Lord, Peter received three special privileges. He was to be the rock, the stable foundation on which the Church of Christ was to be built: "Thou art Peter,* and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). By these words Christ established that religious society, the Church, the Kingdom of God upon earth, of which Peter was to be the head.

He received the keys and the power represented by the keys, i.e. the power of supreme authority and dominion over the Church of Christ: "I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19). The power of the keys,

* Peter, in Greek and Latin, means *rock*.

moreover, confers the authority to make rules and laws for the government of the Church.

And lastly, Christ commissioned Peter alone to feed the *whole* flock, both His lambs and His sheep, both laity and clergy, that there might be *one* fold and *one* shepherd, that is, one Church and one Chief Pastor : "Feed My lambs ; feed My sheep" (John xxi. 16, 17). Now to feed, in the language of Scripture, means to guide, rule, and govern ; and from the very first ages the Catholic Church has always acknowledged the supreme power of the successors of St Peter, in spiritual matters, over all Christian Churches.

In regard to Peter's appointment, therefore, we must bear in mind the above-named facts, that Christ built His Church upon Peter as upon a *rock* or foundation stone ; that He gave to him, but not to the other Apostles, the *power of the keys* ; and that He made him the supreme Pastor and commissioned him alone to feed the *whole* flock.

Christ, moreover, prayed that Peter's faith might ever remain steadfast, and His prayer could not fail to be heard : "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not : and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). By a wonderful dispensation of Providence, the See of Rome, Peter's See, is the only one of the Sees founded by the Apostles that has kept the faith, and that has come down to our own days in the unbroken succession of its bishops.

We know that St Peter was in Jerusalem at the time of the Pasch of the year A.D. 42, from the fact of his miraculous escape from prison during the persecution under Herod Agrippa, and that he was present at the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 50). About the year A.D. 40 he established his Apostolic seat at Antioch,* and did not transfer it to Rome till two years later. Already under the Emperor Claudius, as Eusebius on the testimony of Clement of Alexandria informs us, he had preached the Gospel in the capital of the Roman world ; and it is commonly believed that he was in Rome at the time when Claudius issued an edict (A.D. 47) by which the Jews were to be banished from the city, the self-same edict which banished Aquila and Priscilla, who most likely had been converted to Christianity by St Peter himself. When St Peter first visited the City of the Caesars, he must have found there many Christians, for strangers from Rome had witnessed the miracle of Pentecost, and had heard the first preaching of the Apostles. We can therefore hardly doubt that many Roman converts figured in the 8,000 converted by Peter's first two sermons.

From St Peter's first Epistle he would appear to have spent some time in Pontus and in other provinces of Asia Minor, since it was written to recall to the minds of the disciples there what things he had already taught them, by word of mouth ; but his principal glory was the Church of Rome. It was from Rome that he wrote both his

* The fact of the foundation of St Peter's Episcopate at Antioch is preserved by unbroken tradition, and is moreover commemorated by the Church in the Feast of St Peter's Chair at Antioch, February 22nd.

Epistles to the Christian communities of Asia Minor. In the first of them appear the words : "The Church that is in Babylon . . . saluteth you ; and so doth my son Mark" (1 Pet. v. 13). Now Babylon is used merely in a figurative sense for Rome, which, on account of the great corruption that prevailed there, had become, in the eyes of the Jews, the centre of impiety, as the Assyrian capital had been in the days of their fathers. His second Epistle was written very shortly before his martyrdom, as we gather from the text : "Behold this second Epistle I write unto you . . . being assured that the laying away of this tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me" (2 Pet. i. 14). He suffered martyrdom (A.D. 67) in the reign of the Emperor Nero, being crucified, according to Origen, with his head downwards.

The fact that St Peter was at Rome, and founded the Church there, was never called in question before the sixteenth century. His sojourn there is proved from the testimony of the ecclesiastical writers of the first three centuries, who expressly affirm that he was Bishop of Rome, that he died at Rome and was buried there. Eusebius tells us that St Peter founded the Church of Rome and was its bishop twenty-five years (42-67). We have the testimony, too, of Scripture ; and many ancient monuments bear witness to the same fact.

CHARACTER OF ST PETER.—When we come to study the character of St Peter, we find him of an ardent, impetuous disposition, yet firm, courageous, and generous. His influence made itself felt over the other Apostles, and his very qualities pointed him out as their natural leader, or as the centre around which they must reunite on important occasions. From his Epistles and his discourses reported in the *Acts*, we find him to be of a most practical nature ; and his character was still further ennobled by an ardent love for his Divine Master, and a burning zeal for the extension of the newly founded Church. Hence it was that our Lord showed him a very particular and very marked attention. Although he had the misfortune to deny his Divine Master, yet, after the Resurrection, our Lord gave him fresh proofs of His regard by continuing him in his primacy over all, and appointing him in the most explicit manner the visible head of His Church : "Feed My lambs ; feed My sheep" (John xxi. 17, 18).

From what we have read above we see that the Church of Rome had, as its co-founders, the Apostles Peter and Paul, and that St Peter not only visited Rome, but became its first bishop ; that they both suffered martyrdom for the faith, St Paul, in virtue of his being a Roman citizen, being beheaded, and St Peter crucified, probably on the same day, June 29th, A.D. 67. Thus did they water with their blood and glorify the Church which they had planted in the eternal city.

The Christians of the time, we are told, raised over them two modest monuments, replaced to-day by the glorious Vatican basilica and the church of St Paul outside the walls.

CHAPTER V

*THE REST OF THE APOSTLES—PRINCIPAL DISCIPLES
OF THE APOSTLES—EXTENSION OF CHRISTIANITY
AT THE END OF THE FIRST CENTURY*

IT was probably about the year A.D. 42, after the martyrdom of St James the Greater and St Peter's miraculous escape from prison, that the Apostles left Jerusalem to spread the Gospel throughout the whole world. Before separating, they are said to have drawn up an abridgement of the doctrines of the Church, a résumé of the principal truths of religion, which should serve as a Rule of Faith for every Christian, and as a bond of union among the different Churches. This symbol of faith, known as the Apostles' Creed, was not at first written, but was preserved and transmitted by oral tradition, a thing by no means difficult, seeing that all the faithful had to commit it to memory and recite it on certain fixed occasions. Tertullian speaks of "a Rule of Faith descending from the tradition of the Apostles," who are said to have composed it before separating, "to go into the whole world to preach the Gospel to every creature." Yet the Creed did not assume its present form till many centuries later.

The names of the Twelve were *Simon*, to whom our Lord gave the name of Peter, and *Andrew* his brother; *James* and *John* the sons of Zebedee, whom He named Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder; *Philip* and *Bartholomew*; *Matthew* and *Thomas*; *James* the son of Alpheus; *Simon* who is called Zelotes; *Jude* the brother of James, and *Matthias*, who filled the place of Judas Iscariot.

The Apostles, then, set out for their various spheres of action; yet not all. St James the Greater, brother of John, and St James the Less, cousin of our Lord, did not follow their colleagues; the first had been put to death, as we have already seen, by Herod Agrippa, the second remained as Bishop of Jerusalem.

ST JAMES THE GREATER.—St James was one upon whom our Lord bestowed many signal favours. He was present, along with Peter and John, at the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, at the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus, at the Transfiguration, and at the Agony in the Garden. Under Herod Agrippa he received the crown of martyrdom, and was the first of the Apostles to give up his life for the faith. Though little further is known of him, yet it is commonly believed that his preaching was confined to the Jews of Palestine and perhaps to the surrounding countries. His body, however, is said to have fulfilled a kind of Apostolic mission in Spain. Carried there, according to tradition, by his disciples immediately after his martyrdom, to save it from the profanation of the Jews, it was at first buried at El Padron, but was subsequently translated to Compostella, where it lies at rest even at this day. Another tradition, which goes as far back as the seventh century, tells us that St James actually visited the country in person and preached the Gospel in Galicia.

ST JAMES THE LESS.—This James, cousin of our Lord and son of Alpheus and of Mary, sister of the Blessed Virgin, has been surnamed the Less merely to distinguish him from the other James who is believed to have been older than he. He was Bishop of Jerusalem, a dignity conferred upon him by St Peter and the other Apostles, and was styled by St Paul one of the “Pillars” of the Church. We are told that he practised mortification to such a degree that he neither ate meat nor drank any wine, and that his prayers were unceasing. Indeed, his sanctity was such that the Jews themselves held him in great veneration and spoke of him as the “Just.” Yet so enraged were the Jews against the Christians on St Paul’s acquittal on his appeal to Caesar, that they even vented their disappointment on St James, whom they hurled down from the platform-terrace of the Temple and then beat to death with a fuller’s club.

His Epistle, which was written shortly before his death, publishes, in the fifth chapter, the “Sacrament of anointing with oil.” It is believed to have been originally written in Greek, as that language was spoken in the East by the dispersed Jews to whom the Epistle was written.

ST JOHN.—St John, the brother of James the Greater, was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and to whose care He entrusted His Virgin Mother. He, together with Peter and James, was singled out by our Lord from among the rest to be a witness of His Transfiguration, of His Agony in the Garden, and of His raising to life the daughter of Jairus; and was one of those who, says St Paul, “seemed to be pillars” (Gal. ii. 9). It is probable that our Lady spent her last days at Jerusalem, and that St John did not leave the city till after her death, about A.D. 48 or 49. We find him in the Holy City A.D. 50, when he was present at the first council. He preached the Word of God in Asia Minor, fixing his residence at Ephesus, which he made the centre of his Apostolic journeys. Accused of impiety towards the gods, he was summoned to Rome, and condemned by the Emperor Domitian to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, but coming out fresh and unhurt, was banished to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, where he wrote the Apocalypse, and, according to some, his Gospel as well as his three Epistles. It was while he was in Patmos that he beheld the visions described in the Apocalypse. Being set at liberty by the death of Domitian, A.D. 96, he returned to Ephesus. We are told that, when he was very old, and had to be carried to the assemblies of the faithful, his one exhortation was, “Little children, love one another.” It is the Lord’s command, he said, and whoso fulfils it has done all he need. He died at the age of a hundred and one.

ST MATTHEW.—Before his conversion St Matthew, the author of the Gospel which bears his name, was known by the name of Levi. Being a publican, or tax-gatherer, he was one day sitting at the receipt of custom, when our Lord called him to be His disciple, and immediately he rose up and followed Him. It was before his departure from Judaea to preach the Gospel in distant countries,

that he yielded to the wishes of the faithful, and, most probably at their earnest request, began, about A.D. 42, to write his Gospel mainly for the Jewish converts in Palestine. He is said to have preached in Ethiopia, after that among the Parthians, and finally to have suffered martyrdom in Persia.

ST THOMAS.—Tradition represents St Thomas as preaching to the Parthians, and meeting his death by martyrdom either in Persia or in India. His body is venerated at Edessa where it is believed to have been taken by St Thaddeus. According to Eusebius, St Thomas sent Thaddeus to Abgarus V, King of Edessa, who was converted and baptised. Certain it is that Abgarus VIII, at the end of the second century, was a Christian, and waged an intrepid war on paganism. Relative to the conversion of Abgarus V, tradition informs us that the king, seized with an incurable disease, sent to Jesus Christ messengers, the bearers of a letter offering Him hospitality and protection against the malevolence of the Jews, and begging of Him to restore him to health ; and that our Lord sent a letter in response, telling him that He could not accept his offer of hospitality, but that He would send one of His disciples to heal him. Some time afterwards St Thomas fulfilled our Lord's promise by sending to the king St Thaddeus, who not only restored him to health but gave life to his soul.

ST JUDE (THADDEUS).—St Jude, brother of James the Less and cousin of our Lord, was the author of the Epistle which bears his name. His labours lay chiefly in Palestine. Eusebius, from an interesting tradition of Hegesippus, tells us that Jude's two grandsons were taken to Rome by order of Domitian, because, being descendants of King David and relatives of Christ, whose mighty kingdom he had heard of, they seemed to threaten his own power ; but that the Emperor, having discovered by their answers to his inquiries and from the appearance of their hands, that they were poor men supporting themselves by their hard toil, and having, moreover, learnt the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, dismissed them with contempt, and ceased from his persecution of the Church, whereupon they returned to Palestine.

ST ANDREW.—Andrew, the brother of Peter, was one of the first called of the Apostles ; yet of his Apostolic work but little is known. He is said to have preached the Gospel to the Scythians, north of the Danube and the Black Sea, then to have returned to Epirus, and eventually to have been crucified at Patras in Achaia. His relics were brought to Italy in 1210, and now repose in the cathedral of Amalfi. St Andrew's cross is always represented in the shape of the letter X. In the ninth century some relics of St Andrew were conveyed by a monk into Scotland, and deposited in a church where now stands the city of St Andrews. For centuries he has been honoured as Scotland's patron.

ST BARTHOLOMEW.—This Apostle preached the Gospel in India, probably Arabia Felix, sometimes by the ancients called ~~India~~ ^{Asia}. It is also recounted of him that he came later into Armenia and was

there flayed alive, after which he was crucified. His relics were eventually deposited in the famous church of St Bartholomew in Rome.

ST PHILIP.—All that we know with any degree of certainty regarding Philip's later history is that he preached the Gospel in Phrygia, and died at Hierapolis, the capital of the country.

ST SIMON ZELOTES.—Simon is reported on doubtful authority to have preached the Gospel in Egypt, Cyrene, and Mauritania, and to have been crucified in Judaea in the reign of Domitian.

ST MATTHIAS.—Matthias, the Apostle elected to fill the place of the traitor Judas, is said to have preached and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia.

THE PRINCIPAL DISCIPLES OF THE APOSTLES.—These were St Mark and St Luke, Evangelists, Titus and Timothy.

ST MARK is generally identified with John Mark of the *Acts*. His mother was Mary the sister of Barnabas ; and it was at her house in Jerusalem that the Apostles were wont to assemble, and to which Peter went immediately after his miraculous deliverance from prison. Tradition makes him the companion of St Peter in Rome, where, at the entreaty of the Christians, he wrote the second of the four Gospels, and whence he was sent by the Prince of the Apostles on a mission to Egypt. There he founded the Church of Alexandria, at that time considered the second city of the world, and became its first bishop. He is said to have been martyred at Alexandria, A.D. 68, in the reign of Nero.

ST LUKE, the author of the third Gospel, as well as of the *Acts*, became the companion of St Paul in several of his Apostolic missions, and is styled by him the beloved physician and his fellow-labourer. He was not an eye-witness of our Lord's life, but in his Gospel he wrote what he had learned from those " who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word." The *Acts* he wrote from his own observation, and must have completed them in Rome towards the end of St Paul's first imprisonment there, seeing that the work ends abruptly without any reference to the result of the Apostle's appeal to Caesar. It is said that, after the death of St Paul, he preached the Gospel in various parts of Greece, and in that country, or according to others at Patara in Asia Minor, received the crown of martyrdom.

TITUS, the beloved disciple and companion of St Paul, was ordained bishop by him and left permanently in Crete, there to finish the work so happily begun by his master. He died at an advanced age, and Candia, the modern capital, claims the honour of being his burial-place. St Paul's Epistle to him, besides giving him advice for his own conduct over his flock, sets before him the necessity of ordaining bishops and priests for the different cities, and the different qualities a bishop must possess.

TIMOTHY was ordained bishop by St Paul and permanently established at Ephesus, as we may judge from the Epistles St Paul addressed to him there. The oldest traditions, too, tell us that he

continued to act as Bishop of Ephesus and died the death of a martyr under Domitian or Nerva. His death seems to have occurred under the following circumstances. The great feast of the goddess Artemis was being celebrated with such licence and frenzy by the citizens of Ephesus that the holy bishop found himself forced to protest, and was set upon by the angry mob and beaten to death with clubs.

How rapidly was the doctrine of Christ known throughout the length and breadth of the Roman Empire ! By the end of the first century, at the time of the death of St John, there already existed a countless number of Christian communities. The Word of Christ had been sown and had taken deep root in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Italy, in Spain, in the south of Gaul, and in parts of Asia and Africa; and for some years the Imperial Court, yea, even the very family of the Flavians, could boast their Christians and their martyrs.

CHAPTER VI

HIERARCHY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

“Obey your prelates, and be subject to them ; for they watch as being to render an account of your souls” (HEB. xiii. 17).

FROM the very commencement we see in the Church of God both masters and disciples, rulers and ruled, clerics and laity ; for just as a kingdom or a state is necessarily composed of two orders of citizens, those who are to command and those who are to obey, so, too, in God’s kingdom upon earth, we have those who are to command and teach, and those who are to obey and be taught.

The highest representatives of authority in the infant Church were the Twelve whom Jesus Christ had chosen from among the first disciples, and had called Apostles.* He had given them a special mission to fulfil : “ As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you ” (John xx. 21) ; and to show them that that mission was not to end with them, but was to be continued by their successors to the end of time, He added : “ And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world ” (Matt. xxviii. 20). They were to preach the Gospel, i.e., to teach the same things which He had taught them, to bind or to loose, to forgive or to retain sins, and to change bread and wine into His own Body and Blood.

One of the Twelve, Simon, was to be the head of this Apostolic college. Our Saviour, whose supreme dignity and authority he was to hold, had conferred upon him the symbolical name of Peter, declaring to him that he was the *rock* upon which the Church was to be built, and thereby securing it against all storms and floods, i.e., against all the powers of darkness. Hence it follows that neither idolatry, nor heresy, nor error, shall ever prevail over the Church of Christ. Peter, moreover, was to confirm his brethren in the faith, all his brethren, Apostles and others, and to feed the whole flock, both the lambs and the sheep ; i.e., he and his successors were to be to the end of time the supreme pastors and princes of the Church.

* Apostle means *one sent*.

Now the power which Jesus Christ delegated to His Apostles they in their turn were to transmit to their successors in the ministry ; and as the Church was to last for all time, and St Peter was to have his successors in the Bishops of Rome, so the Apostles also had to have their successors in the Episcopacy as well as in the Priesthood. Hence they chose Elders from among the faithful, and these they ordained bishops to be their fellow-labourers and successors, to rule the newly founded Christian communities, charging them in like manner to ordain and appoint others : "For this I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee" (Tit. i. 5). To those whom they ordained the Apostles transmitted powers according to a certain fixed rite, the rite of imposition of hands, and entrusted to them the direction of the Churches. It was incumbent on these bishops in their turn to ordain other bishops according to the same rite, neither must they do this lightly nor without due reflection (1 Tim. v. 22), for great is the dignity and heavy the responsibility of the Episcopate. In this way, and not otherwise, is transmitted all authority in the Church ; nor is there any other power except that which comes from Jesus Christ through the Apostles and their successors the bishops.

Those bishops, therefore, who are rightly consecrated, and who are in communion with the Head of the Church, are the true successors of the Apostles. No one separated from its Head can be a member of the Church ; and no power has been conferred on the Apostles and their successors except when they are in union with him upon whom Christ conferred full and supreme power over the whole Church : "Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia."

The true Church of Christ, therefore, must be Apostolic in the unbroken succession of her Pastors from the Apostles, in her Doctrine, and in her Mission ; nor can any religion be the true religion except the one—the only one—that was founded by Christ on His Apostles with Peter as their Head, and which has received her Faith, her Orders, and her Mission from them by uninterrupted succession. No Church can be heir to the promises which Christ made to His Apostles unless it can point to a descent from Apostolic times. Now the Catholic Church alone can point to an unbroken descent, and can give the name and reign of every Pope from St Peter to the present reigning Pontiff.

BISHOPS (*Episcopi*), PRIESTS (*Presbyteri*), DEACONS (*Diaconi*).— Next to the bishops come the priests, but the terms *Episcopi* and *Presbyteri* present a difficulty as to their exact meaning. Some are of opinion that in the beginning all priests were invested with the episcopal power, and that only in the second century the priesthood began to be conferred apart from the episcopate. Now in later times the *Episcopi* were undoubtedly a separate order from the *Presbyteri*, but in Apostolic times the terms were synonymous as we constantly find in the Sacred Scriptures. In the first ages, then, it

would appear that both *Episcopi* and *Presbyteri* were the pastors of the flock and endued with the highest dignity in the Church.

Closely connected with the bishops were the *Deacons*. Now the deacons were ordained for a sacred ministry, and not merely to manage the common stock belonging to the faithful. This is evident from the qualifications required in them, for they were to be full of the Holy Ghost; and from their ecclesiastical functions mentioned in the *Acts*, in the Epistles of St Paul, and in the ancient Fathers. St Philip and St Stephen preached the Gospel immediately, and baptised those that were converted. In the first ages the deacons assisted the bishops and the priests at the Divine office, and distributed the Sacred Chalice of the Holy Eucharist.

We also find *Deaconesses* from Apostolic times down to the sixth century. Their charitable ministry, particularly in regard to the female sex, was indispensable. Their chief duties consisted in privately instructing catechumens, assisting particularly at the baptising of women, and in distributing the common stock. "And I commend to you Phebe, our sister, who is in the ministry of the Church that is in Cenchrae" (Rom. xvi. 1).

CHAPTER VII

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND DISPERSION OF THE JEWS, A.D. 70

FOR many years the Church of Jerusalem, which came into being on the very day of Pentecost, was recruited entirely from among the Jews. From the manner of living of these early converts we see how they adhered to the teaching of the Apostles, and how united they were in faith and charity, having but one heart and one soul: "They persevered in the doctrine of the Apostles, in the communication of the Breaking of Bread, and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42). Though under no obligation to do so, they sold their goods and possessions and had all things in common, giving to each one according to his necessities. They continued to go up to the Temple to pray at certain fixed hours, but passed from house to house for "the Breaking of Bread" that they might thus conceal the Holy Mysteries from the gaze of the profane.

Although by the death of our Saviour the existing ceremonies and sacrifices were abrogated, and the New Alliance had succeeded the Old, still it was not in the designs of God that the faithful should at once separate themselves from the rest of the Jews, or entirely give up the observances of the Law. They continued to observe them as long as the utility of the Church required it; and thus they avoided giving scandal to their weaker brethren, or perhaps hindering them from submitting to the doctrines of the Church. Hence we find them observing the ritual of the Jewish religion, and assembling for prayer on the days [and at the hours appointed, just as our Lord and His Apostles had been accustomed to do. They had their children

circumcised, and abstained from the forbidden meats. We even see St Paul making and keeping the Nazarite vow, and hastening back to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

Their devout life in common was for a time disturbed by persecution. Stephen, one of the seven deacons, we have seen, fell a victim to its fury, while many fled from Jerusalem, and thus took with them and scattered the seed of the faith throughout Palestine, and even as far as Antioch. But their bishop, St James the Less, as well as the other Apostles, remained in the city.

In the year A.D. 66 came a further dispersion, when Cestius Gallus, with a powerful army, laid siege to Jerusalem. In this the Christians of Jerusalem could not fail to discern the significance of our Lord's warning : "When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand. Then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains ; and those who are in the midst thereof depart out ; and those who are in the countries not enter into it. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things may be fulfilled that are written" (Luke xxi. 20-22). Believing, then, that they saw in this event the fulfilment of a prophecy, they all retired from the city before its subsequent investment by Titus ; and yielding to the instructions of their Divine Master, and led by Simeon who had succeeded St James as Bishop of Jerusalem, they passed beyond the Jordan to Pella, a village of the Decapolis, situated among the hills of Peraea. Four years later, A.D. 70, Jerusalem was razed to the ground. Later they returned and settled down amidst the ruins of the Holy City, and from this time dawned a new era of prosperity for their Church. They were joined by other Jews in great numbers, who, if they were not all converted, no longer thought of persecuting their Christian brethren, being rendered more tolerant by the sufferings they themselves had endured.

Persecution, however, did again overtake them, but this time it came from the Romans. In the year A.D. 135, a fresh revolt in Palestine was severely repressed, and the Jews were finally banished from Jerusalem by the Emperor Hadrian, who rebuilt the city and planted a Roman colony there, known until the reign of Constantine as Aelia Capitolina. Since that time the Jews, as a people, have remained dispersed among the nations of the world.

Thus the Jewish Christian Church of Jerusalem came to an end. In its place was formed a community of Christians, Greek in language, and Greek in nationality, who had as their bishop St Mark, himself also a Greek. The new Church had nothing in common with the Synagogue, preserved nothing of its exterior worship either in its practices or its liturgy, and thus resembled all the other Christian Churches spread throughout the Roman Empire, and even beyond its borders.

But oh, the lot of those who had remained in Jerusalem when Titus drew his army around it ! His father Vespasian, having been proclaimed Emperor, left to him the subjugation of the Jews. Titus

promptly moved with all his forces against the doomed city, which was torn asunder by internal factions in deadly conflict with each other. Although the defences of Jerusalem were remarkably strong, the defenders were hampered by the hundreds of thousands of worshippers who were assembled for the celebration of the Passover, and who were unable to leave the city ; but still more were they hampered by the Jewish factions, and by the crowds of reckless men whom the reduction of Galilee and Samaria had driven to take shelter within its walls. The Zealots, led by Eleazar, filled the city with tumult, and urged the mob to massacre the chief priests and the nobility. They overpowered the High Priest Ananus and his party of law-abiding citizens and, as the extreme national party, became supreme in Jerusalem.

But the Zealots themselves were split into three factions, led respectively by Eleazar, John of Giscala, and Simon Bargiora. Eleazar was assassinated, while John and Simon, even in front of the common enemy, could not repress their mutual hatred.

Meanwhile Titus had drawn his army closely round the city, and was encamped on the ridge of Scopus. In his attack on the outer wall he met with fierce opposition, but at length effected an entrance through the breaches made by his military engines. Even at this juncture he would have spared the sacred city, and made attempts at reconciliation, but the honourable terms that he offered were rejected with scorn.

Famine had already begun to prevail within the walls, and the wretched inhabitants were reduced to the direst extreme of want and misery. We are told of a certain mother who snatched her infant son from her breast and roasted him to satisfy the cravings of hunger. After eating a portion, she had just concealed the remainder for future use when some soldiers, attracted by the scent of food, rushed into her dwelling, and threatened to kill her if she did not at once disclose where she had it concealed. When she uncovered what was left of her child, the famishing men were filled with horror, and, after gazing for a moment in amazement at the inhuman sight, fled terrified from the house as though it had been plague-stricken.

The minds of the people, moreover, were alarmed by the report of strange prodigies having been witnessed. A certain fanatic, as he daily traversed the streets, was heard constantly repeating the cry, " Woe to Jerusalem ! Woe, woe to the city, and to the people, and to the Holy House ! " till at last exclaiming, " Woe, woe to me also ! " he was struck dead with a stone from a Roman catapult. Both Jew and Roman affirmed that the gates of the Temple had suddenly opened of themselves, and that a voice more than human, and as of a great multitude, was heard to exclaim, " Let us remove hence."

The desperate struggle still went on ; the fortress of Antonia was destroyed, and the Temple itself was now exposed to attack. John and Simon, whom pressing danger had united, retreated to the upper

city. The Temple at length yielded, and was entered by the Romans. Titus would yet have saved the Holy of Holies from destruction had not a soldier, seizing a brand, fired the doors. Soon the whole building was in flames, and there was no hope of saving it. It was utterly destroyed. Again Titus sent to offer terms to the leaders, but his messenger was driven back with curses. He thereupon vowed the entire overthrow of the city. Thousands were slain, while famine, more cruel than the sword, slowly but surely carried off even greater numbers. Those who survived were sold as slaves. Even the most moderate estimate gives the number of slain and prisoners in this fatal war as 1,462,000.

After the flames had consumed the Temple, Rufus, the lieutenant of Titus, drew the plough over the spot where the sacred building had stood : " Sion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a heap of stones " (Mic. iii. 12). The city was desolate, and the words of our Lord were literally fulfilled : " Amen I say to you, there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone " (Matt. xxiv. 2).

John and Simon were seized in their attempt to escape into the country. The former was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, the latter was reserved to grace the conqueror's triumphal entry into Rome. Many fled from Judaea into Cyprus, Cyrene, and Egypt, and the spirit of the Jewish nation now seemed utterly broken. We have already recorded (A.D. 135) the final dispersion under Hadrian of such as had by that time returned ; and on the spot where the Temple had stood was raised a temple dedicated to Jupiter, and another to Venus over the Holy Sepulchre.

Now after the destruction of Jerusalem what became of Judaism ? What befell the Jewish religion ? Generally speaking the Jews preserved their ancient belief ; their faith in the Sacred Books remained almost intact.

But it was not with their cult, i.e., with the rites and ceremonies employed in their worship, as it was with their faith. Their traditional and necessary external worship became impossible. In fact the Temple of Jerusalem no longer existed, and yet it was only in the Temple that, according to the Law, their cult, whole and entire with all its accompanying sacrifices, could be carried out. Moreover the distinction of tribes no longer existed. The tribe of Levi, unable, outside Palestine, to continue to live on the tithe and the first fruits, disappeared like the others ; and with it disappeared the priests, the High Priest, and the entire priesthood, which could never lawfully be separated from the tribe of Levi. In place of the legal ceremonies in the Temple there remained to the Jews only the restricted and secondary cult of the Synagogue ; a cult in which the lawful ministry of the priests, which had now become impossible, was replaced by the empty ministry of the rabbis.

And Judaism, now ended as a cult, equally disappeared as a religious society. The Great Sanhedrim was no more ; and as the sacerdotal body, now rendered impossible by the dispersion and confusion of the tribes, could not lawfully be replaced, there was

no longer any central spiritual authority to which everyone must submit. As a religious society, then, Judaism was dissolved.*

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERSECUTIONS—THEIR CHARACTER—FIRST AND SECOND PERSECUTIONS

CHRISTIANITY, from its very dawn, met with persecution, first from the Jews, and afterwards from the pagans, who looked upon it merely as a Jewish sect. It was the progress of the faith in the Roman capital that gave rise to much disturbance among the Jews. The name of Jesus Christ pronounced with love by some, with a feeling of hatred by others, became in very truth a “sign of contradiction” (Luke ii. 34). These commotions, which would seem to have assumed the character and proportions of a riot, caused the Emperor Claudius, in A.D. 47, to publish an edict banishing all Jews from Rome, and with them the Jewish Christians. It was then that St Peter had to leave behind him at Rome, without a shepherd to guard them, those Christians who had been won over from paganism, and with the rest of his fellow countrymen had to depart thence. But even under Nero the Roman people had already begun to speak of the Christians and to look upon them with suspicion.

The Romans respected the gods of the different nations, and showed themselves very tolerant, but that toleration was granted only on the condition of respect for the national religion of Rome. This Roman tolerance, however, was not extended to Christianity, which, unlike Judaism, had not a national character, since Christian faith and morals and worship were addressed to all, without distinction of race or nationality. On becoming a Christian one did not cease to be a Roman, so that Christianity was a menace to state worship, and its spread threatened ruin to official paganism. The uncompromising rejection by the Christians of the national gods was hateful to the idolatrous common people, and a kind of treason in the eyes of statesmen. They were unjustly accused of many abominable crimes, and even their miraculous healings and their deliverance of possessed persons by exorcism were attributed to sorcery, while their Sacred Writings were looked upon merely as books of magic. No one believed that Rome or the Roman State could exist without its national gods, and this was the principal cause of the persecution of the Christians even on the part of the best and most Roman of the Roman Emperors.† Yet the principal aim of their persecutors was not to put them to death but rather to compel them to apostatise.

FIRST GENERAL PERSECUTION UNDER NERO (A.D. 54–68).—Under Nero began that course of persecution against the Christians which

* See Marion’s *Histoire de l’Église*, Vol. I, 98 sqq.

† See Hedde’s *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Vol. I, 35 sqq.

continued with but short intervals down to the reign of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century. The Church was too flourishing to pass unnoticed, and was now destined to cement her foundations with the blood of her martyrs. Thus far she had been allowed to grow up in obscurity ; she was now to be made the scapegoat of a cruel Emperor, who, justly alarmed for his own safety, found it convenient to turn public indignation against her to screen his own guilty self.

On July 19 of the year 64, a great fire burst out in Rome which utterly destroyed, or rendered uninhabitable, ten out of the fourteen wards into which the city was divided. The suspicions of the people fell upon Nero, who intended, they believed, to destroy the old city that he might raise up a new one on a more magnificent scale and give it his own name. They openly charged him with the incendiarism. Terrified by their clamours, the tyrant artfully sought to turn the torrent of their resentment in another direction, and openly accused the despised Christians of being the authors of the conflagration. Although no one believed him, yet this did not prevent their delight in seeing punishment fall on the adherents of the new creed which they held in such detestation. Heathen testimony itself bears witness both to the vast numbers of those who suffered, as well as to the severity of the persecution : " In order," Tacitus tells us, " to put down the rumour, he set up as objects of accusation and punishment those whom, already hated for their wickedness, the people called Christians. This name was derived from one Christus, who was executed in the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judaea ; and this accursed superstition, repressed for the moment, broke out again, not only through Judaea, the source of the mischief, but also through the city, whither all things outrageous and shameful flow together to find many adherents. Accordingly those were first arrested who confessed (that they were Christians), afterwards a vast number upon their information, who were convicted, not really on the charge of causing the fire, but rather for their hatred to the human race. Mockeries were added to their death : such as that they were wrapped in the skins of wild beasts and torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or set on fire and burnt, when daylight failed, as torches to light up the night. Nero had lent his own gardens for the spectacle, and he gave a chariot race, in which he was seen mounted on his car or mingling with the people in the dress of a charioteer. As the result of all, a feeling of compassion arose for the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of condign punishment, yet as being destroyed, not for the common good, but to satiate the cruelty of one man."*

The fire of persecution once kindled in the capital spread rapidly, and the example set by the Emperor was soon followed in the provinces. The persecution is said to have continued up to the death of Nero, who put an end to his own life A.D. 68. Among its most celebrated victims were the glorious martyrs St Peter and St Paul.

* Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44.

SECOND GENERAL PERSECUTION UNDER DOMITIAN (A.D. 81-96).—After the death of Nero the Church enjoyed comparative rest for well-nigh thirty years, until Domitian, son of Vespasian and brother of Titus, particularly towards the end of his reign, began to display all the vices of Nero, and imitated him, too, even in his hatred of Christianity.

In A.D. 95, he ordered that the tax *fiscus Judaicus* should henceforth be paid not only by the Jews proper, but by Christians and proselytes; in a word, by all who regarded the Bible as a sacred book. Now there were to be found Christians who refused to pay the tax, as their thus likening themselves to the Jews appeared to them no better than a denial of their faith, at any rate in appearance. Fateful was the consequence of their refusal. Henceforth was to cease, in the eyes of the government, all confusion that had hitherto existed between Jew and Christian, a confusion which, till then, had been to the advantage of the Christians, in the fact that it secured to them the same toleration as was accorded to the Synagogue. From this time onwards Christians are to be treated by the State as enemies, even as a pernicious sect.

That same year an edict of persecution was passed against the Christians, not because they refused to pay the tax, for this could affect but a small number, but a charge of "atheism" was levelled against them, a charge which might easily be magnified into one of treason, for which the penalty was death.

We may judge of the violence of the persecution from the manner in which Domitian treated the most distinguished, even his nearest relatives. Flavius Clemens, his cousin-german and colleague in the consulship, he put to death on a charge of atheism, i.e., of refusing to worship the Roman gods, and banished Domitilla, the consul's wife, to the island of Pandataria. Their niece, Flavia Domitilla, he banished to the island of Pontia, where she afterwards won the martyr's crown in the reign of Trajan. And many other persons of high rank, charged with the same crime, met with a similar fate.

Nor was the persecution confined to Rome, but it spread throughout the whole empire. We have already seen how St John the Evangelist was persecuted in this reign; how, when summoned to Rome, he was cast alive into a cauldron of boiling oil, and coming out unscathed was banished to the island of Patmos. We have seen, too, how Domitian, learning that the two grandsons of St Jude were descendants of King David, had them brought to Rome and examined; and how, when he saw their hands hard and rough with toil, and learnt that the kingdom of Jesus Christ was not a kingdom of this world but a spiritual kingdom, he dismissed them with scorn and put an end to the persecution.

Domitian was succeeded by Nerva (96-98). Not only did this Emperor dismiss all those accused of atheism by the "informers," but recalled those who had been sent into exile, and repaired, as far as possible, the wrongs that had been done them. But his reign

was too short for the lasting happiness of the Christians. After he had been on the throne two years he died, and was succeeded by Trajan, under whom persecution again broke out.

Before the end of the first century we find that the worship of the Crucified had penetrated into every quarter of pagan Rome; and so great had become the number of the Christians that, in spite of the countless victims of the persecutions, their strength was unbroken. We can point to the Gens Cornelia which gave hospitality to St Peter; to the Gens Caecilia whence sprang, in the following century, the holy virgin Saint Cecilia; to the Gens Pomponia to which belonged Pomponia Graecina, who was converted about A.D. 43, and received the name of Lucina; to the Gens Flavia to which belonged St Petronilla, virgin. Under Pope St Clement, third in descent from St Peter, the Roman Church was the most flourishing of all the Churches.

CHAPTER IX

THIRD PERSECUTION—THE EARLIEST APOLOGIES—MARTYRDOM OF SAINTS IGNATIUS AND POLYCARP

THIRD GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER TRAJAN (A.D. 98–117).—From the time of Nero it would seem that, even though no special edict had been issued against the Christians, they were nevertheless liable to persecution merely from the fact that it was illegal to profess Christianity, *Christianos esse non licet*; and we shall see them persecuted and put to death for no other crime than that of bearing the name “Christian.” Once they ceased to be identified with a body like the Synagogue, which was recognised by law, they became liable to persecution. Hence we find Pliny, the Roman Governor of Bithynia, handing Christians over to execution simply on their acknowledgement of the name.

Trajan, whose policy it was to put down all clubs and associations, believing that their meetings might become centres of political disaffection, had published an ordinance against all nocturnal assemblies; and, as the Christians were not tolerated by law, and therefore could have no other time than night for the quiet celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, the description Pliny had given him of their society was sufficient to convince him that it bore some resemblance to an *hetairia* or club.

At the time when Pliny, as Imperial Legate, arrived in Bithynia and Pontus, these provinces, in which St Peter had formerly preached the faith, already possessed many flourishing Churches. The pagan festivals were neglected and the temples of the gods almost deserted, and on this account many Christians were denounced by their enemies before the tribunal of the new Governor. Pliny ordered a minute inquiry to be made into the charges; and although he could convict the accused of no crime, he gave them the choice either to apostatise or be put to death, reserving those who were citizens to

be sent to Rome. Many who were accused on anonymous information were allowed to clear themselves by offering incense to the Roman gods and to the Emperor's statue. Finding that the greater number preferred death to apostasy, he became troubled in mind, and wrote to the Emperor for advice as to what course of action he should pursue.

Trajan's answer was to this effect. He directed that "informers" should be discouraged; that the Christians should not be sought for; that anonymous accusations should be treated with contempt; that those who were lawfully convicted of being Christians should be punished; but that those who denied that they were Christians, or who were willing to sacrifice to the idols, should be set at liberty.

In this persecution perished St Simeon at the age of 120 years. He is said to have been a kinsman of our Lord, and consequently of St James the Just, on whose death he was chosen Bishop of Jerusalem. Being denounced as a Christian and a descendant of David, he was condemned to suffer all manner of torments, which he bore with such unflinching constancy that the spectators stood amazed to see one of his age able to bear sufferings so long and so cruel. He was at last crucified.

Another famous martyr under Trajan was Pope St Clement, fourth Bishop of Rome.* According to a very probable tradition he was exiled beyond the Euxine into what is now the Crimea, where he found two thousand Christians condemned to the marble quarries. His presence among them filled these holy confessors with joy, and his preaching was the cause of numerous conversions in the surrounding country. At last the Roman magistrate there tried to compel him to offer sacrifice to the gods; but the holy Pontiff remained steadfast in his refusal, and was condemned to be cast into the sea with an anchor fastened about his neck.

But the martyrdom of St Ignatius, the venerable Bishop of Antioch, stands out as the most striking event of this persecution. He was a disciple of St John the Evangelist, and succeeded to the See of Antioch about A.D. 70.

At this time Trajan was engaged in a war with the Parthians, and it was probably during the Emperor's stay at Antioch, on his march against them, that Ignatius was brought before him on the charge of being a Christian. He was condemned by Trajan in person to be sent to Rome and cast to the lions. On his journey he received numerous visits from his friends, and was allowed to send letters to the different Churches, and even one to the Christians at Rome praying them not to rob him of the martyr's crown by trying to save his life through the intercession of his friends. Being allowed to ashore at Smyrna, he had the comfort once again of conversing with St Polycarp, his fellow-disciple under St John, and his follower in martyrdom.

On his arrival at Rome he was hurried off to the Colosseum, where the whole city seemed to be gathered to see, with other sights,

* St. Peter, St. Linus, St. Cletus or Anacletus, St. Clement.

the venerable servant of God torn to pieces by furious lions. Hearing the roar of the beasts, Ignatius exclaimed : " I am the wheat of Christ ; I must be ground by the teeth of these animals to be made the bread of Christ." The hungry lions were instantly let out upon him, and seizing him with their teeth, they soon tore him to pieces and devoured him, leaving nothing of him but the larger and harder bones. These were devoutly gathered up and laid in a chest by the faithful and borne to Antioch, receiving every mark of honour and respect from the Churches on the way.

During the reign of HADRIAN (117-138) the constant demand for the persecution of the Christians in deference to the mob cry of "*Christianos ad leones,*" and the cruel slanders from which the Christians so unjustly suffered, gave rise to the earliest of those *Apologies* addressed by a succession of learned Christian writers to the Emperors, in explanation and vindication of the conduct of the Christians. In this way were they determined to lay before them, and the heathen public generally, the sublime and moral principles of Christian practice and belief, in the hope of disabusing them of their false notions. The first of these *Apologists* were St Quadratus, an immediate disciple of the Apostles, and, according to general opinion, Bishop of Athens, and St Aristides, who also belonged to Athens, where he practised the profession of a philosopher.

Did Hadrian let himself be persuaded by the representations of these two illustrious advocates of Christianity ? It would appear so. He certainly recognised the injustice of yielding to popular caprice ; and in answer to an appeal addressed to him by the Proconsul of Asia regarding the treatment of the Christians, he directed a rescript on this subject, enjoining that no Christian be put to death without a formal accusation being made against him, and only for crimes distinctly proved after a proper hearing of his case. By this rescript the Christians were indeed secured against the danger of popular clamour, but from this time their religion was recognised as illegal and condemned by the laws of the Empire. So that the rescript, instead of granting toleration, merely left the local magistrates free to enforce existing laws as they might think fit ; and the favourable dispositions of Hadrian towards the Christians, if in truth they existed at all, were belied by his actions on more than one occasion.

After the Jewish war, to which we have already referred, he showed himself less tolerant to the Christians than hitherto he had been, and many of them suffered for their faith. It was during his reign that the Pope St Alexander I suffered martyrdom, as also St Eustachius and his wife Theophista, who, together with their three sons, were burned alive in a brazen bull. Soon after Hadrian came to the throne he built for himself a magnificent palace near Tibur, and during his sojourn there he himself condemned to various and cruel tortures St Symphorosa and her seven sons for their refusal to offer incense to his offended deities.

The policy of Hadrian towards the Christians was continued by his successor, the gentle ANTONINUS PIUS (138-161). The rescript of Hadrian, as well as that of Trajan to Pliny, was still in force ; and although Antoninus did not show himself without pity for the Christians, and forbade all popular uprisings against them, and even, according to some, sent out a rescript forbidding all persecution against them purely on account of their faith, yet their position remained critical. This we gather from the first *Apology* of St Justin which he addressed to the Emperor, and from another of his apologetic works, the *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*.

Justin, later to be surnamed Martyr, was a native of Palestine, but of Greek origin. Born of heathen parents at Neapolis in Samaria, about the year 103, he became a convert to Christianity at the age of thirty. Henceforth, as he himself tells us, he gloried only in the name of Christian, and desired only to bear it well. He defended the faith in his writings, which contain a vindication both of the character of the Christians and the truth of their religion. In the next reign he sealed his faith with his blood.

In his first *Apology*, which is the earliest *Apology* to come down to us, and which he signed with his name, and addressed to Antoninus, the Senate, and the whole Roman people, he entreats the Emperor to form his judgement of the Christians from their actions, not from the name they bear. "Let an impartial inquiry be made," he writes, "let our conduct be diligently sifted, and if upon examination it be proved that we are either criminal in our actions, or impious in our tenets, let guilt be punished according to its deserts ; but if our innocence be proved, it will be neither reasonable nor just to treat us like malefactors. . . . Deign only to investigate our conduct, and to scrutinise our principles, you will with pleasure find that of all the subjects of your empire none are more submissive, none more loyal, none more disposed to keep and secure the public peace than we Christians are. We acknowledge you for our sovereign, sole master of the conquered world. You we respect, and you we cheerfully obey in all things not repugnant to religion. Religious worship belongs to God alone. He is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, the great Creator of all things, omnipotent and eternal. In our daily supplications to Him we humbly beg that, to the imperial power with which He has invested you, he will vouchsafe to add the glorious prerogative of reigning with wisdom and justice. We adore Him alone who is God, the sovereign Judge of all our actions. His adorable eye always sees us ; He knows and beholds our most secret thoughts. . . . His justice will assign to all men punishment or reward in a future life according to their works in this. Such is our belief." He then goes on to explain the chief doctrines of Christianity, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of our Saviour ; and to show how devoid of truth are the calumnies of their enemies, he briefly adds : "For no other than a religious purpose do we meet upon the Sunday ; to worship God our Creator, the sovereign Ruler of the universe ;

to hear the word of God ; to offer up to God, and to partake of what we call the Eucharist, which is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ the incarnate, under the form of bread and wine."

We have no evidence of the effect such arguments had upon Antoninus. We read of no edict published by him against the Christians ; yet during his reign many suffered for their faith, the most famous being the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, St Polycarp, the disciple of St John and master of St Irenaeus. His condemnation was passed some five years after the first Apology of St Justin.

It was a festival day at Smyrna, and great was the concourse of people in the amphitheatre to witness the sports, but more especially to gloat over the torments of the martyrs and their finally being cast to the wild beasts. Eleven Christians had refused to apostatise, and when one of them, a youth named Germanicus, even provoked the beasts to attack him, his courage so amazed and angered the multitude, now drunk with the blood of their victims, that they clamoured for the death of Polycarp. "Let the atheists be given up," they cried, "let Polycarp be brought!" Now the law, as we have seen, was against the Christians being yielded up to the popular clamour ; but the law was disregarded.

Although the holy bishop might easily have escaped, he allowed himself to be seized and brought to the amphitheatre when the games and shows were at their height. Pagans and Jews alike vied with one another in their exclamations of fierce joy at the sight of the holy confessors torn by the cruel fangs of the wild beasts, and applauded with delight when they saw the venerable Polycarp, the disciple and friend of the Apostle St John and the last link that bound the Church to the Apostolic age, being led forth. He was brought before the Proconsul, who was then sitting in judgement, and asked by him to respect his own grey hairs, and swear by the genius of Caesar and renounce Jesus Christ. A reply, calm, noble and dignified, came from the lips of the saintly confessor : "These four score and six years have I served Christ, and how can I now blaspheme Him? From Him I have received much good, never any harm. I cannot blaspheme my King and Saviour. I am a Christian." To the Proconsul's threat that he would sentence him to be burned to ashes if he did not recant, Polycarp replied : "The fire you threaten me with burns for a time only, and then goes out. There is another fire, kindled for the punishment of evil ; this burns for ever. Bring against me what you will : I am ready."

The Proconsul thereupon gave orders that a herald should thrice cry out in the amphitheatre : "Polycarp hath proclaimed himself a Christian!" The whole multitude, as with one voice, exclaimed : "This is that teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods : he that teaches multitudes neither to sacrifice nor to worship!" And they demanded that he should be burnt alive.

They were given their wish. The fearless martyr, with his hands bound behind him, was led to the stake, and heaps of wood were piled around him and set on fire. The flames shot up quickly, but were seen to bend in the shape of an arch, gently encircling the body of the saint. Then an attendant, armed with a spear, was ordered to drive the weapon into the body of Polycarp, which he did, and immediately there flowed forth such a quantity of blood that it extinguished the fire. The faithful afterwards gathered up the remains of the martyr, "to them more precious than jewels, and deposited them decently in a place where they hoped annually to meet and celebrate with joy the day of his happy *birth*."

Thus Polycarp had not long to wait before he himself was to walk in the footprints of St Ignatius, his illustrious fellow-disciple, whose chains he had reverently kissed at the time when Ignatius was being conducted to Rome to suffer martyrdom. With the death of Polycarp (A.D. 156) the persecution in the East came to an end.

CHAPTER X

FOURTH PERSECUTION—THE THUNDERING LEGION —THE MARTYRS OF LYONS—ST JUSTIN AND ST CECILIA

FOURTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS (A.D. 161–180).—The reign of the philosopher Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, brought more cruelties to the Christians than any of the preceding reigns, not excepting those of Nero and Domitian. The Emperor, himself a deliberate defender of the pagan system and utterly opposed to the doctrine of Christianity, regarded the refusal of the Christians to join in the worship which he, the head of the State, paid to the national gods, as a slight on his own majesty. No special persecuting edict was published; but the heathen priests and philosophers, resting their assurance on a prince as much devoted to superstition as to philosophy, became daily more and more aggressive towards the Christians.

This reign was marked by many frightful calamities, arising from pestilence, famine, and earthquakes; and these, together with an unwonted overflow of the Tiber and the ever-increasing pressure on the frontier by the barbarians, in particular the Marcomanni and the Quadi, caused the year 166 to be known as the *annus calamitosus*. The feeling against the "atheists" could with difficulty be kept in check, since it was their impiety, so it was averred, that was bringing this succession of evils on the Empire. Once this notion got abroad, no more was wanting to set ablaze the fire of persecution.

Instead of curbing the furious outbursts of the people and forbidding them to seek out victims, which the policy of Hadrian demanded of them, the governors of provinces themselves led the way in putting into force the old laws against the Christians. Informers were

again encouraged, and even the evidence of slaves against their masters was extracted by means of the most cruel tortures.

But the Christians did not give up hope ; the greatness of their peril seemed but to fill them with fresh courage. The threatening danger called forth numerous *Apologies*, those of St Melito, Bishop of Sardis, of St Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, of St Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, and others, and the *Second Apology* of St Justin Martyr, which has come down to us.

The chief seat of the persecution was in the West. In Gaul we find Christianity already established, especially in the old Roman province on the Rhone, and St Pothinus at this time Bishop of Lyons.

The most celebrated martyrs under Marcus Aurelius were St Justin and St Cecilia, together with many others at Rome. In the West we have St Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons, and a disciple of St Polycarp, St Sanctus, deacon of Vienne, St Attalus of Pergamus, "pillar" of the Church of Lyons, and the young slave Blandina ; these were the first martyrs of Gaul with whose names we are acquainted, and, although this is the first certain page of the origin of Christianity in Gaul, it is most probable that Gaul, like the other provinces of the Empire, had its regularly constituted Churches.

THE THUNDERING LEGION (A.D. 174).—It has been said, on the authority of Tertullian, that Marcus Aurelius showed favour to the Christians after the miraculous deliverance of his army from the German barbarians through the prayers of the "Thundering Legion," *Legio Fulminata*, though this is not probable, since the persecution would seem to have continued with unabated fury. The story is as follows : The Emperor, who was at war with the Quadi and other barbaric tribes of Germany, had hastily advanced into the dry and mountainous parts of Bohemia, where he was in danger of losing his whole army for want of water. The heat was intense, and the enemy had succeeded in cutting off the water supply from the Romans, thus putting them in the utmost peril, since they were unable to fight, and were in momentary danger of being cut to pieces. In his alarm the Emperor gave orders for incantations and prayers to be made. The magicians had recourse to their secret arts ; the pagans prayed aloud to their false deities ; and the soldiers of the twelfth legion, which had been recruited from Melitene in Cappadocia, and was entirely composed of Christians, fell on their knees and called upon the true God. In answer to their prayer God sent a terrible storm of hail and thunder over the ranks of the barbarians, which struck down or burnt vast numbers of them, while over the Roman army there fell such an abundance of rain that it was saved from destruction by drought. The miracle was clear ; upon this Christians and pagans alike were agreed ; but while the Christians attributed it to the power of Him whom they worshipped, the pagans regarded it as an answer to their own prayers. The miracle, attested by two contemporary writers, Tertullian and St Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis, can hardly be called in question, but Tertullian is at

fault when he states that Marcus Aurelius put an end to the persecution in token of his gratitude to the Christians of the Thundering Legion. - The fact is that he attributed the miracle to Jupiter Pluvius, and, if anything, the persecution became more violent.

At Lyons we see the holy bishop, Pothinus, at the age of ninety years, arraigned before the Proconsul. To the Proconsul's question, "Who is the God of the Christians?" Pothinus answered : "If thou art worthy, thou shalt know." Thereupon the people fell upon him with the ferocity of wild beasts : they struck him and kicked him ; and without mercy, or regard for his age, loaded him with every kind of insult. At length, being rescued from their fury, all torn and bleeding, he was cast into a dismal dungeon, where he died two days afterwards.

The most wonderful example of constancy was displayed by a young slave girl named Blandina, who was tortured for the sake of extracting evidence from her against her Christian mistress. The most cruel torments heaped upon her were so patiently and heroically endured that the very pagans were forced to exclaim in admiration : "Never has it been known among us for a woman to suffer so long and so cruelly!" Still not satisfied, they continued their inhuman devices to shake her constancy, but her only reply amid all her suffering was, "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is done among us." She was at last thrown into a net and gored to death by a mad bull.

The inhumanity of the pagans did not stop with the martyrs' death. They cast their bodies to the dogs and to other beasts, and what these left they committed to the flames, then cast the ashes into the Rhone to prevent the faithful from giving them that honour which they knew was paid to other martyrs, as well as to make a mockery of their hopes of a resurrection.

At Rome St Justin was tried with six others by the prefect of the city, before whose court he had been denounced as a Christian by the cynic philosopher Crescens, with whom he had often disputed, and who, being more than once worsted in argument by Justin, now compassed his death. The prefect, unable to move the constancy of the martyrs, gave orders that those who would not swear by the gods, nor obey the Emperor, should be scourged and beheaded ; which sentence was duly carried out.

St Cecilia, the beautiful daughter of a noble family of senatorial rank, was married to a young patrician named Valerian, with whose consent she renewed a vow she had already made to consecrate herself to God, and to the end remained a spotless virgin. After a time, moved by her words, both her husband and his brother were converted, and received baptism at the hands of a holy bishop, Urban, and ere long were called upon to seal their faith with their blood. Cecilia alone remained, but not for long. Having been arrested, she was brought before the prefect and required to offer sacrifice to the gods, and on her refusal to comply, was condemned

to suffer death by suffocation. She survived the tortures prepared for her, and after a day and a night spent in a hot-air bath, made seven times hotter than usual, she was found to breathe as freely as before. A lictor was then sent in to despatch her with a sword. He dealt her three indecisive blows on the neck—the number the law allowed—and was then compelled to withdraw, leaving her thus all bathed in blood. For well-nigh three days Cecilia, with her neck half severed, lay on the pavement of her bath, fully sensible and joyfully awaiting her crown. On the third day she gave up her soul to God (A.D. 177). In 822 Pope Paschal I caused her tomb to be opened, and found the body fresh and incorrupt. It was clad in a blood-stained robe of golden tissue, while at the feet was a linen cloth rolled up, also stained with blood. Again, under Pope Clement VIII eight centuries later (1599), the precious treasure was exposed to view in the church of St Cecilia in Trastevere, and found to be in the same state of preservation.

COMMODUS (A.D. 180–193).—Under Commodus, the unworthy son of Marcus Aurelius, the laws against the Christians remained unchanged. Although Commodus was not so ill-disposed towards them, and although the rescript of Trajan was applied with considerable clemency, persecution was still their lot, but less violent than before. Even at Rome Apollonius, a member of the senate, was beheaded because he was a Christian.

Yet, owing to the personal indifference of the Emperor and to influences in his own palace, the Church seemed to enjoy comparative peace. In the year 183, Commodus took for his wife Marcia, who, if not already baptised, was at least a catechumen, and showed great kindness to the Christians. Through her the severity of their lot was considerably softened. On one occasion she even summoned to the palace Pope Victor to learn from him the names of those confessors who, for their faith, had been condemned to work in the mines of Sardinia ; and having obtained letters of pardon from the Emperor, she sent these by the hands of the priest Hyacinth to the parties concerned, among whom was the future Pope Callistus.

For well-nigh two centuries the Church, barely constituted and without any human means of defence, was almost everywhere and continually proscribed and persecuted. Following upon the inhuman tortures invented by the capricious ferocity of Nero, and the executions to which the suspicious cruelty of Domitian gave rise, came the laws formulated against her by the Trajans and the Antonines, which were more disastrous for the Christians than the ferocity and wickedness of the two tyrants mentioned above. After the short but violent persecutions of the first century, persecution became the order of the day in the second. The blood of the Christians was poured out abundantly in all parts of the Empire, and thousands upon thousands, whose names for the most part are known to God alone, gave their lives for the faith.

Yet the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Humanly speaking she ought of necessity to have perished, swept away in a torrent of blood, but at the end of the second century she was more vigorous and flourishing than ever, even at the very time when the decay of the Roman Empire was beginning to set in. Already the mustard seed, spoken of by the Evangelists, was become a tree, and was beginning to shoot its branches over the world. In a number of the Eastern provinces, especially in Asia Minor and Pontus, the Christians formed nearly half the population ; Edessa was a Christian kingdom under King Abgarus VIII (176–213) ; Italy could count its some sixty bishops, and Proconsular Africa with Numidia seventy or more ; St Irenaeus appeals to the traditions of the Churches of Germany, of Spain, of Gaul, of Egypt, and of the East, against the Gnostics ; Tertullian cites, among the countries in which the faith has triumphed, those inhabited by the Getulians, the Moors, the Spaniards, the Gauls, the Britons, the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Scythians ; and there were many others, he said, which were unknown to him.*

To summarise this briefly, we may say that the faith had already spread throughout every province of the Roman Empire, from the Danube and the Euxine (Black Sea) to Ethiopia and the Lybian Desert, and from the Tigris to the Rhine, even stretching as far as Britain ; that it had penetrated the Parthian Empire and even remoter parts of the East, and beyond the bounds of the Empire to the barbaric tribes of the North.

CHAPTER XI

FIFTH AND SIXTH PERSECUTIONS—SAINTS PERPETUA AND FELICITAS—ST IRENAEUS

FIFTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER SEPTIMUS SEVERUS (A.D. 193–211).—The murder of Commodus put an end to the line of the Antonines ; and in the struggle for the Empire which followed, Septimus Severus became Emperor on the death of his competitors. His accession to the throne brought, on the whole, peace to the Christians for some ten years. Even the Emperor's son, Caracalla, was put in charge of a Christian nurse, and many of those who had formerly been persecuted for their faith were given access to his palace.

But in the provinces in particular the Christians were still exposed to popular fury, and to the oppression and rapacity of provincial governors, who were open to bribes as the price of toleration, and who tortured or put to death many of the poorer class to make the rich more lavish in purchasing their freedom. Africa, in the last years of the second century, became the theatre of a great persecution. At Carthage many Christians were cast into prison, many were beheaded, while others were done to death in various cruel ways,

* See Marion, *Histoire de l'Église*, I, 128 sqq.

by being torn with iron hooks till they expired, or by crucifixion, or by being thrown to the wild beasts. Tertullian, who himself was a witness of their sufferings, wrote in their defence his famous *Apologeticus* and *Ad Nationes*, and, for the consolation of the sufferers themselves, his *Ad Martyres*. In Egypt, too, the Christians suffered the same cruel treatment as at Carthage, and there is room for believing that the other provinces of the Empire were exposed to the same kind of persecution.

These earlier persecutions were the effect of existing laws, without the active co-operation of the Emperor ; but in 202, the position of the Christians in regard to the law entered upon a new phase. In this year an edict was published which differed essentially from all other edicts ; it annulled the rescript of Trajan, and forbade only *Conversion to Christianity*, i.e., one was forbidden either to teach Christianity or to embrace it. Throughout the length and breadth of the Empire persecution broke out afresh.

At Carthage died the celebrated martyrs Saints Perpetua and Felicitas ; at Alexandria, St Leonides, the father of Origen, as also the slave Potamiaena and her mother ; at Lyons, St Irenaeus and many others. So violent was this persecution that, according to Eusebius, the faithful were of opinion that the time of Antichrist had come.

At the time when St Perpetua, a noble and wealthy lady of Carthage, was brought before her judge, her aged father besought her to deny her faith and thus save her life ; to pity his grey hairs, and think of her own infant son at her breast. To his entreaties he added threats, but nothing could shake Perpetua's resolution, and she was condemned with the others to be thrown to the beasts for the barbarous entertainment of an African mob.

Felicitas, who, like Blandina of Lyons, was a slave, was one of those who shared Perpetua's imprisonment, and who, while waiting for the time of her execution, became a mother. Even their delicate state stirred no feeling of pity in the cruel hearts of their persecutors ; and these two young mothers, the noble Perpetua and the slave Felicitas, were exposed in the arena to be tossed by a wild cow, but receiving no mortal hurt, were in the end hacked to death by the swords of gladiators.

At Alexandria, St Leonides was cast into prison and afterwards beheaded. The persecution seems to have fallen with special fury upon this city, where thousands are said to have been sacrificed by every variety of torment.

St Potamiaena, a beautiful slave, was denounced by her master as a Christian in revenge for her refusal to consent to his wicked desires. Along with her mother, St Marcella, she was let down gradually into a cauldron of boiling pitch, and in this way her agony was prolonged for fully three hours before life became extinct.

In Gaul, too, the storm of persecution burst violently. Among many others, St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, sealed with his blood the faith which he had so earnestly defended against the heretics.

In Lyons, so great was the number of those who at this time gave their lives for the faith, that Severus is said to have made it his boast that he had at once despatched the pastor and all his flock.

Although the death of Severus (211) did not put an end to the persecution, it gradually died down during the reign of his successor CARACALLA (211-217). Under this prince and his two immediate successors, the Christians do not seem to have been especially persecuted, although the laws in regard to Christianity still remained unchanged. HELIOGABALUS (218-222) tolerated all forms of religion, while ALEXANDER SEVERUS (222-235), in his Lararium, or private oratory, had busts of Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, and Christ, and had many Christians in his palace.

An interesting story is told of Alexander, which not only proves him to have been of a tolerant disposition, but shows us how the Christians were gradually coming into possession of places for public worship. On a celebrated occasion he gave judgement in favour of the Christians against the eating-house keepers. The Christians had taken possession of a public building in which to meet for religious worship, a building to which the eating-house keepers also laid claim. When the matter in dispute was laid before the Emperor, he declared, by means of an Imperial rescript, that it was better that God should be worshipped there under any form of worship whatsoever than that the place should be handed over to the cooks. Alexander even allowed his mother, Mamaea, to summon Origen from Alexandria to Antioch that she might receive instruction in Christianity from him.

During this period, however, there were several cases of persecution, and among them that of Pope St Callistus (222). During a popular outburst against the Christians in Rome, the pagans hurled the holy pontiff from a window down into a well, and there stoned him to death.

SIXTH GENERAL PERSECUTION UNDER MAXIMIN (A.D. 235-237).—Alexander Severus was murdered in 235 by Maximin, a Thracian barbarian, who seized the throne. In his hatred for the memory of Alexander, the new Emperor relentlessly persecuted all who had been his friends, and all those to whom he had shown special favour, and consequently the Christians; yet without any concern for the national religion. The edict which he published was directed against the bishops in particular and the clergy generally, and this for no other reason than that Alexander had shown sympathy towards them.

At Rome Pope St Pontian, together with a celebrated priest, St Hippolytus, was condemned to exile in Sardinia, where he eventually died under the cruel blows of his tormentors. On setting out for exile he resigned his See to St Antherus, who also received the crown of martyrdom in 236.

There came a respite from persecution under GORDIAN (238-244), and under PHILIP the Arabian (244-249). So favourably was Philip

SEVENTH PERSECUTION

disposed towards the Christians that many ancient authors claim him as the first Christian Emperor. Although he came to the throne by the murder of his predecessor, it is said of him that he was deeply sincere in his repentance for his crime, and that, when on Easter eve he would have presented himself at the Church to take part in the Divine Office, he was forbidden by the bishop to enter till he had joined the ranks of the penitents. The Emperor, we are told, obeyed, thus giving an edifying example of piety and repentance. Be this as it may, one thing is certain, viz., that during his reign liberty was accorded to the Church.

CHAPTER XII

SEVENTH PERSECUTION—SAINTS AGATHA, PONIUS, AND SATURNINUS

SEVENTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER DECIUS (249–251).—With Decius began a war of extermination against the Christians, a systematic attempt to stamp out the faith. To accomplish this end it was not his intention, like Septimus Severus, merely to forbid conversion to Christianity, or, like Maximin, only to strike at its leaders by getting rid of the bishops and the clergy. Both of these Emperors hoped thus to starve it to death; but Decius conceived a more drastic idea, he would uproot it entirely throughout the Empire. Regarding the spread of Christianity as a danger to the State, and persuaded that, if the gods of the State were to yield place to it, Rome and the Empire must fall with them, he resolved at all costs that paganism must be fully restored to its former position, and that the Christians must be forced to embrace it.

His edict meant their extinction. It paid no regard to age or sex or position. All suspected of having entered the Christian fold must present themselves before a local authority for the purpose of offering sacrifice to the gods, otherwise the magistrates had strict orders to seek them out, and constrain them by torture, by exile and confiscation of their property, to deny their faith. Such as consented to sacrifice were allowed to go free; those who fled had their goods seized and were forbidden to return on pain of death; if anyone refused to sacrifice, torture and imprisonment might serve to break his resolution.

At this time the Christians formed about a third of the population of the Empire, and there was a danger of the Emperor's plan being the ruin of the State; therefore he must proceed with caution. The comparative immunity from persecution which the Church had enjoyed during the later reigns had been a means of greatly adding to her numbers; but the practical absence of all peril had brought a corresponding weakening in the stolidity of the Christian life, and a visible decay in fervour; and as the policy of Decius was to multiply as much as possible the number of apostates by promises and threats, and by long imprisonments and tortures, he trusted that he would

be able in this way to weary the patience and break down the courage of such as at first might refuse to submit to his wishes. The result was that great numbers apostatised, while many sought by flight to preserve their faith with their life. At the same time thousands are said to have sealed their faith with their blood.

Those of the faithful whose first fervour had so far cooled that they fell away belong to one of the following classes : (1) those who sacrificed to the idols (*sacrificati*) ; (2) those who burnt incense before the images (*thurificati*) ; (3) those who received a certificate in proof of their having sacrificed (*libellatici*) ; and (4) those who had their names inscribed in the registers as having complied with the Emperor's wishes (*acta ferentes*). A great controversy was afterwards to arise as to whether those of the "lapsed" (*lapsi*) who repented of their apostasy should be restored to the Church.

Many who sought safety in flight, on arriving at the coast, embarked on the first ship that came to hand ; others wandered in desert places or among the mountains, exposed to hunger and thirst and cold, or to the mercy of wild beasts and robbers, their sufferings often ending in death.

St. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, acting on our Lord's injunction : "When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another" (Matt. x. 23), fled and hid himself in the country, and from his place of retirement administered spiritual aid and comfort to those in distress as long as the persecution continued.

St Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of Neocaesarea, also counselled flight, and with his flock withdrew to the desert.

St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, believing that he would be the better able to minister to his flock and thus serve the cause of the faith, concealed himself in the vicinity of the city, and from his retreat laboured diligently in his pastoral work of confirming and comforting the suffering Churches of Africa. Speaking of his flight, he tells us : "Since the martyr's crown comes by the grace of God and cannot be gained before the appointed hour, he who retires for a time and remains true to Christ, does not deny his faith, but only bides his time." When the time actually came to Cyprian in the next great persecution, he willingly gave up his life for the faith.

Among those who fled at this time we must not fail to mention St Paul, the first hermit. Fearing lest the torture of a terrible persecution might endanger his perseverance, he fled into the desert with the intention of returning when the danger was past, but finding great delight in prayer and penance, he remained the rest of his life in solitude. During his early wanderings he found in the depth of the desert a small space enclosed by rocks where a solitary palm tree grew, overshading the rocks, while at its foot bubbled a spring of clear water. Here he spent ninety years in penance and contemplation. The anchoritic life had its foundation thus, and for long was a form of perfection eagerly sought by countless fervent Christians who wished to withdraw from the dangers and temptations of the world to give themselves up to retirement and prayer.

Of those who, at this time, shed their blood for the faith, one of the first was Pope St Fabian. He suffered in Rome (250).

A short while after, there suffered at Catania, in Sicily, a rich and noble maiden Agatha, who, from her tenderest years, had consecrated her virginity to God. The Governor of Sicily, hearing of her surpassing beauty, and wishing to get her into his power for his own evil purposes, had her arrested, and gave her into the charge of a vile woman, who, for a whole month, did all in her power to corrupt Agatha's virtue ; but all to no purpose. Full of rage at finding his wicked plans foiled, the Governor displayed a special cruelty towards her ; but nothing that he could do against her was able to shake her constancy. At length she breathed her last while undergoing the most inhuman tortures.

Among the most celebrated martyrs during this persecution was St Pionius, priest of the Church of Smyrna, a true follower of St Polycarp. Brought before the magistrate, who used every argument that persuasion and threat could suggest to induce him to recant, he was condemned to be burnt alive. With a countenance full of joy, he walked with a firm step to the place of execution, stretched himself on the pile, and extended his hands and feet to be nailed. Even yet he was urged to deny his faith, with the promise that the nails should be taken away and his life spared ; but he answered that his choice was fixed. His executioners then raised him up and nailed him to an upright post around which they piled much wood. The flames rose up about him ; and, when the people at length thought that he was dead, he once more opened his eyes, and with a smile on his lips, and repeating the words, "Lord, receive my soul," he calmly expired. The fire is said to have left the body of the martyr totally unscathed.

Other martyrs in the East were St Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, St Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, and St Polyeuctes, an Armenian soldier, believed to have been an officer in the "Thundering Legion" stationed at Melitene.

At this time, too, was martyred St Saturninus, first Bishop of Toulouse. On one occasion a great multitude had gathered before an altar erected on the Capitol, where a bull stood ready for sacrifice, when Saturninus chanced to pass near attended by three of his clergy. A tumult arose, and he was set on by the crowd, but his three companions were allowed to escape. Upon his refusal to offer sacrifice to their gods, they fastened him to the bull and chased the terrified animal down the steps of the Capitol, dragging the martyr at its heels and dashing out his brains against the hard stones. His remains were afterwards secured by the faithful and reverently buried.

A pretty legend, too, is connected with the persecution under Decius, the legend of the "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus." These are said to have been seven brothers who, during the persecution, withdrew to a cave and there fell asleep only to awake 200 years later, in the reign of Theodosius II (447), at which time they found

Christianity to be the religion of the Empire. The story was first told in the sixth century by Gregory of Tours.

GALLUS (251-253).—The accession of Gallus brought peace to the Church, but a peace that was soon destined to be disturbed. A terrible plague broke out, and the pagans, by order of the Emperor, everywhere offered public sacrifices to the gods that they might be propitious and put an end to the scourge. The refusal of the Christians to participate in these ceremonies drew upon them the popular rage, which ascribed to them the calamities that had fallen upon the Empire, and persecution again broke out. Pope St Cornelius and his successor St Lucius were banished, the former dying in exile; but St Lucius returned to Rome after the death of Gallus.

CHAPTER XIII

EIGHTH AND NINTH PERSECUTIONS—ST LAWRENCE, ST CYPRIAN, AND ST TARCISIUS

EIGHTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER VALERIAN (253-260).—At the beginning of his reign Valerian showed himself most favourable to the Christians, and stayed the persecution against them. But after four years, instigated by his minister Marcianus, a sworn enemy to the Christians and their religion, a man addicted to the practice of magic and termed an Egyptian magician, he published an edict in which he forbade all assemblies of Christians, and the use of their cemeteries, under pain of death, and ordered all bishops, priests, and deacons to sacrifice under pain of banishment.

On one occasion the pagans came across a number of Christians who had secretly met in a sand-pit for the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. Without allowing so much as one to escape, they built them up where they were, and thus buried them alive.

The story of the acolyte, St Tarcisius, presents a peculiar interest. In those days the office of carrying the Blessed Sacrament to those imprisoned for the faith was entrusted to inferior ministers, and even to the laity. When Tarcisius was one day passing through the streets of Rome bearing with him the Consecrated Species, he was suddenly stopped by a number of soldiers, who required him to deliver up to them whatever he was bearing. The youthful confessor was resolute in his refusal to do their bidding, and was beaten to death by them where he stood. We are told that, when his persecutors searched his lifeless remains, they could find no trace of what he was bearing. The Christians took up his body and buried it with great reverence, but it was not till a century later that there was placed over his tomb, by Pope St Damasus, an epitaph commemorating his deed.

Under this edict of Valerian, St Dionysus, Bishop of Alexandria, and St Cyprian, Bishop of Corinth, were both sent into exile.

Finding that the measures he had taken to suppress the Christians

were ineffectual, Valerian issued a second edict which far surpassed the first in its severity. By it the clergy were to be put to death. Men of rank and position were to be deprived of their privileges and their property ; and should they still hold out, they were to be put to death. Ladies were to be banished and to have their property confiscated : Christians who belonged to the court (*Caesariani*) were to be sent in chains to work on the imperial estates. No definite penalties were provided for the common people, great numbers of whom, following their bishops into their various retreats, served to spread the faith in districts where it had previously been unknown. In consequence of these edicts died countless numbers of martyrs of every age, sex, and condition.

Pope Sixtus II was beheaded, and with him were put to death on the same day six of his deacons. St Lawrence, the chief of the seven deacons, had but a few days to wait before he also received his crown.

As Sixtus was being led to execution, Lawrence followed him with his eyes bathed in tears because he was not allowed to share his fate. "Whither are you going, father," he said, "without your son ? Whither, holy Pontiff, without your deacon ? You never used to offer sacrifice without your minister. Why do you leave me ? Why am I not to attend you now ? In what have I displeased you ? Prove me anew, and see whether you have chosen a deacon unworthy to dispense the blood of Jesus Christ."

The Pope comforted him in these words : "Do not weep, my son, in three days you will follow me. A more glorious victory is prepared for you. As for me, but a slight trial awaits me, sinking under the weight of years." He then charged him to distribute among the poor the treasures of which the Church was the guardian, lest they should be carried off by the pagans. Now Lawrence, in virtue of his position as first deacon, had charge of the treasures of the Church, and of the poor whom she supported.

The prefect of the city knew of the rich offerings which the Christians put into the hands of the clergy, and demanded the treasures of the Church from Lawrence. The saint promised that, at the end of three days, he would show him treasures surpassing even the wealth of the whole Empire. Imagining that Lawrence was about to put him in possession of great riches, the prefect granted him three days' delay in which to arrange them in order.

During the interval Lawrence passed through the whole city, and sought out the lame, the blind, and the infirm, the poor orphans and destitute widows who were supported on the alms of the Church. These he arranged in rows, and having invited the Governor to come and see them, "Behold," he said, "these are the treasures which I promised to produce, more precious in the eyes of God than the gold and silver you so eagerly covet."

The Governor, mad with passion at the supposed insult, threatened Lawrence with no ordinary death ; then calling his attendants to him, he bade them bring forth an iron grate with cross-bars in the shape of a gridiron, and bind the deacon at full length upon it. Live

coals were next placed under it, and the cruel Governor gloated at the thought of seeing him thus die by inches. In the midst of his pains, not a murmur escaped from the lips of the holy martyr, nor did he display the least sign of suffering ; but when he had lain completely still for some time on one side, he calmly remarked, " My body may now be turned ; this side is sufficiently cooked." At a sign from the Governor, the executioners turned him over on the other side ; and when at length Lawrence felt that the fire had penetrated him through and through, he said : " Now I am done enough ; eat, if you will." Then, with a prayer on his lips, he peacefully resigned his soul to God.

In Spain, St Fructuosus, Bishop of Tarragona, received the crown of martyrdom by being burnt alive, together with his two deacons, Augurius and Eulogius.

We have seen how, under the persecution of Decius, St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, fled from the city, not through fear of martyrdom, but in obedience to the Divine warning, and that he might the better serve his flock. His constancy was proved by his martyrdom under Valerian.

Having been arrested, he was taken to the residence of the Pro-consul Galerius, followed by a great crowd of the faithful. Galerius used every argument in his power to shake the constancy of Cyprian, but all to no purpose ; and seeing the fruitlessness of any further attempt, he straightway condemned him to be beheaded ; which sentence Cyprian received with the simple words, " Deo gratias." The Christians present loudly proclaimed that they, too, were willing to die with their bishop.

He was led out into the country to a level spot surrounded with trees, the branches of which were soon crowded with Christians who had come to witness his triumph. Arrived at the place of execution, he fell on his knees, and, after uttering a short prayer, he ordered twenty-five gold pieces to be given to his executioner ; then he bandaged his own eyes, and requested a priest and a deacon to bind his hands. The Christians spread linen cloths round about him to receive his blood, and these they afterwards treasured as precious relics. The fatal blow was struck which ended his mortal career, and the faithful bore away his body, and buried it during the night with great solemnity.

We read of 153 Christians who, at Utica, were cast into a pit of quicklime, and, on account of their great number and the splendour of their victory, received the glorious name of "*Massa Candida*," the white band.

Another glorious martyrdom during this persecution was that of St Nicephorus, a layman, who gave his life for Christ at Antioch. A priest named Sapricius and Nicephorus were as brothers to each other till some cause of enmity arose, which led them to shun each other's presence. Nicephorus entered into himself, and thrice sent friends to intercede for him with Sapricius ; but in vain. The persecution having extended to Antioch, Sapricius was brought

before the Roman magistrate on the charge of being a Christian and a priest, and refusing to give up his faith, was put to the torture. This he bore with remarkable fortitude, and still refusing to deny his faith, was at last led out to die.

On his way to execution, Nicephorus met him, and casting himself at his feet besought him : " O martyr of Christ, forgive me ! Lo, He whom thou hast confessed before many witnesses is waiting to crown thee." But Saprius replied not. Nicephorus did but the more earnestly entreat him, and continued thus till they arrived at the place of execution. At the very moment when the sword was raised to strike the fatal blow, " Hold ! " cried Saprius to the executioner, " Strike not. I promise to sacrifice."

Nicephorus, overwhelmed with grief at the apostasy of his unhappy friend, exclaimed : " O my brother, lose not the crown thou hast so hardly won." But Saprius heeded him not ; whereupon Nicephorus confessed that he also was a Christian, and asked that his life might be accepted in place of that of Saprius. His request was granted ; and as the reward of his humility and charity he thus received the martyr's crown.

GALLIENUS (260-268).—This Emperor not only put a stop to the persecution, but published an edict granting religious tolerance throughout the whole Empire. He ordered restitution to be made, as far as possible, to the bishops, and even to private persons, of the goods of which they had been deprived by confiscation ; the bishops, too, were to recover possession of the Christian cemeteries. Christian exiles were recalled, and Christianity was to become a "*religio licita*." On the whole, the Christians enjoyed comparative peace and tranquillity for some forty years, in spite of a few isolated martyrdoms, such as those under **CLAUDIUS II** (268-270).

NINTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER AURELIAN (270-275).—The period of rest spoken of above, though threatened, was barely interrupted by Aurelian. At the beginning of his reign, this prince showed rather a friendly disposition towards the Christians than any desire to oppress them, as we find him passing a decision in their favour against the heretical Paul of Samosata. By a council of bishops assembled at Antioch, a sentence of deposition and excommunication had been passed on Paul on account of his denial of the Divinity of Christ. Paul sought protection under Zenobia, who was at that time mistress of the East and ruled from Palmyra, a beautiful city built by King Solomon, the magnificent ruins of which are still to be seen, standing lonely, in the midst of a vast desert, a day's journey to the west of the Euphrates. Aurelian declared war on Zenobia, besieged and took her capital, and carried her off a captive to Rome to grace his triumph.

It was after this event that the bishops sent an address to Aurelian, asking that the sentence previously passed on Paul might be duly carried out. To this he readily consented, and, according to Eusebius, gave orders that the Church of Antioch be given " to

those to whom the bishops of Italy and of the city of Rome should adjudge it."

Yet after this we find Aurelian, late in 274, rekindling the fire of persecution by publishing an edict against the Christians, an edict which threatened to make general the persecution which at most was but fitful and local. The reasons for its publication are unknown, while the death of the Emperor prevented it from being universally carried out, and thus saved the shedding of much innocent blood. He fell by the hand of an assassin as he was marching against the Persians. Although, then, this persecution is spoken of as the ninth general persecution, it barely merits the term "general," for, before the edict could be published throughout the Empire, Aurelian was no more, and his successor TACITUS (275-276) put an end to the persecution; nor did PROBUS, CARUS, or CARINUS, by whom the Roman world was ruled for the next ten years, interfere with the Church. We may therefore pass over their reigns without further comment. The next edict against the Christians appeared in the reign of Diocletian.

CHAPTER XIV

TENTH PERSECUTION—ST ALBAN, THE "THEBAN LEGION," ST GEORGE, ST DOROTHY, ST SEBASTIAN, ST AGNES, ST LUCY AND ST EULALIA

TENTH GENERAL PERSECUTION, UNDER DIOCLETIAN (284-305).—That he might the better be able to defend the Empire against the barbarians and stifle the many factions by which it was so miserably distracted, Diocletian chose as a colleague Maximian, with whom he shared his power. He retained the East for himself, with Nicomedia as his capital, and left the Western provinces to Maximian, who, for the most part, fixed his seat at Milan. These two *Augusti* ruled the Empire with equal authority for nine years, when they resolved to share their power with two other colleagues of inferior rank to whom they gave the title of *Caesars*, and whom they designated their successors. Diocletian associated with himself Galerius in the East, and Maximian took as his colleague in the West Constantius Chlorus, who had previously been employed by Aurelian in Britain, where, by his marriage with the British princess St. Helena, he became the father of Constantine. Thus we see established a political system calculated to secure the internal peace of the Empire, and competent to provide a force ready at any moment to repel every inroad of a foreign foe.

For well-nigh twenty years the Church enjoyed all but unbroken peace, and to all appearances was both secure and prosperous. The Christians were allowed to practise their religion without restraint, while many of them occupied honourable positions and posts of trust in the government. But peace brought in its wake indifference and a decay of piety.

It was not till the winter of 302, when Diocletian, whose reign was fast coming to an end, was at Nicomedia, that Galerius, who hated the Christians, used all his influence to induce him to issue an edict of persecution against them. The aged Emperor at first rejected the advice, being unwilling to molest a body of citizens which, for forty years, had remained all but undisturbed, and had the edict of Gallienus in its favour. Even his wife Prisca and her daughter, Valeria, were Christians.

Galerius, however, continued to press his point, and at last prevailed upon his colleague, against his better judgement, to order the last, and what proved to be the greatest, of the persecutions, since it had as its object the total extirpation of Christianity. The savage Maximian shared with Galerius the same indomitable hostility to the Christians, and with him readily adopted the principle of extermination.

The storm burst in Nicomedia, and, spreading rapidly, "deluged the earth with blood from the East to the remotest corners of the West." Even Constantius Chlorus, with all his humanity, was unable to repress those magistrates who, out of superstitious motives or from hatred to the Christians, were induced to carry out the edicts of Diocletian. Hence, in Britain we find, among many others, St Alban, the proto-martyr of Britain, who being beheaded at Verulamium (304), gave his name to St Albans, a town which rose up from its remains. Maximian, the Emperor of the West, had ever been unfavourably disposed towards the Christians ; and that is why, even in the earlier part of this reign, we find, particularly in the West, many martyrs for the faith ; in Gaul, for example, we have the martyrdom of St Victor, St Maurice and the whole Theban legion.

The famous "Theban Legion" is said to have consisted of over 6,000 men, and probably took its name from the Thebaid, or Upper Egypt, where it is supposed to have been raised, and where Christianity was in a flourishing state. At this time Maximian was at Octodurum, the modern Martigny, a town situated on the Rhone, in Valais ; and there he assembled his troops before marching against the Bagaudes, a people consisting of Gaulish peasants then in revolt not far from Paris. The legion, which was wholly Christian, and which was commanded by St Maurice and two other officers of inferior rank, St Exuperius and St Candidus, had been summoned for this expedition along with other legions. When near the Alpine town of Agaunum, now called St Maurice (Moritz), the soldiers, learning for the first time that the expedition was being directed against their brethren in the faith, and that they would be required to offer sacrifice to the gods for the success of their undertaking, refused to march for such a purpose, or to join the main body of the army in the solemn sacrifice.

Enraged at their resistance, Maximian gave orders for the legion to be decimated, and consequently every tenth soldier on whom the lot fell was at once slain. But such cruelty as this was not able to shake the fortitude of those who were left. A second decimation was ordered,

but with a like result. Maurice, in the name of his comrades, declared to Maximian that, although they were soldiers, they were at the same time servants of God, and ready to obey their Emperor in all things consistent with their duty to God, a duty for which they were ready to sacrifice their lives. Exasperated by their obstinacy, and powerless to shake their resolution, Maximian surrounded them with his army, and threatened to slay them in a body if they further refused to do his bidding. The threat was carried into effect ; and though they might have resisted and sold their lives dearly, they made no attempt to defend themselves, but laying down their arms, peacefully submitted to martyrdom (286).

Many local persecutions must have taken place in the earlier part of Diocletian's reign in virtue of existing laws against the Christians, and owing to the caprice of the local magistrates ; but, by reason of the severity of the new edicts, persecution was destined to rage more fiercely than it had done even in the days of Decius.

The *first* edict (303) was based on that of Valerian, but with some differences. Under its provisions ladies were not punishable, nor does it mention the death penalty. It enacted the destruction of all the Churches ; the surrender of the Sacred Books ; and the withdrawal of political, civil, and domestic rights from all professed Christians. The *second* edict (303) ordered the imprisonment of clerics, both bishops and inferior clergy. The *third* edict (303) enacted that the clergy were to be set free if they recanted, but that tortures were to be inflicted in case of their refusal to offer sacrifice. The *fourth* edict (304) enjoined on all Christians, irrespective of age, sex, or condition, the necessity of sacrificing to the gods on pain of death. At the same time the judges had strict orders to have recourse to the most cruel torments imaginable to compel the Christians to apostatise.

Diocletian published all these edicts in the provinces that came directly under his authority, and sent them to his three colleagues for publication throughout the rest of the Empire. Galerius and Maximian, who had inspired them, lost no time in putting them into execution. It was otherwise with Constantius Chlorus who, with Treves as the centre of his government, ruled over Gaul and Britain, and later over Spain also. With the exception of the states ruled over by Constantius, the Empire was ravaged by three wild beasts in human shape. And if for a time persecution raged in Britain and Spain, this may be explained from the fact that Constantius, whose chief residence was at Treves, and who was thus generally far away from these outlying provinces, had his orders disobeyed by his delegates. Constantius later declared that, if the Romans had slain as many barbarians as they had executed Christians during the first years of the fourth century, the Empire must ever have remained unshaken.

Christians were driven in crowds to be slaughtered ; men, women, and children were promiscuously massacred or burnt to death in hundreds. A single town in Phrygia, whose inhabitants, all Christians, had refused to sacrifice, was given up to the flames and entirely

consumed, together with its eight to ten thousand inhabitants. It was said that never had a war proved such a drain on the human race, nor had the Church ever reaped more glorious triumphs. The churches and places of Divine worship were everywhere pulled down, the Sacred Books destroyed, and every mark of Christianity was blotted out. Vast numbers of Christians, shunning the light of day, concealed themselves in caverns or in the catacombs, or, deeming it safer to dwell with wild beasts than with their more savage fellow-men, fled for greater safety to the deserts. We can name only a few of the vast numbers of those who suffered during this persecution.

In the *East* we have in Nicomedia itself St Gorgonius and St Peter, who were among the principal officers of Diocletian's palace, and who were most cruelly tortured to death. From the palace the persecution soon spread over the Church of Nicomedia. St Anthimus, Bishop of the same city, received the crown of martyrdom, and was accompanied in his triumph by the priests and the other clergy of his Church.

St George, England's patron, was born in Cappadocia, of Christian parents. In his youth he became a soldier, and rose to great favour with Diocletian, who made him military tribune. When the persecution broke out, George had the courage to make an earnest appeal to the Emperor on behalf of the Christians, and pointed out to him the injustice that was being wrought on a body of citizens who ranked among his most faithful subjects. Stung by his intrepidity, Diocletian had the brave soldier stripped of his military decorations, and condemned him, as a Christian, to be slowly tortured and finally beheaded. George's courage and fortitude in the face of danger, and his readiness to combat evil and injustice, typified in the dragon, caused his memory to be held in honour, and himself to be the chosen guardian of many a province and state.

St Dorothy, a young Christian maiden of Caesarea, seems to have been the daughter of parents who also were martyrs before her. When the Roman Governor came to Caesarea, he summoned Dorothy before his tribunal on the charge of being a Christian. On her boldly professing her faith, he tried at first to shake her constancy by ordering her to be stretched on the rack. Still she remained steadfast. He next tried to win her over with fair promises, offering her an honourable marriage if only she would sacrifice to the gods, but, if she refused, death was to be the penalty. The better to accomplish his purpose, he put her in charge of two apostate women, in the hope that they might corrupt her and turn her from the faith; but such was Dorothy's influence over them that they were led to repent of their former weakness, and, encouraged by her example, returned to the faith. Once again she was put to the rack; and while her limbs were being cruelly stretched, other tortures, still more inhuman in their nature, were applied in quick succession. All this time her countenance was lit up with a heavenly joy that caused all who gazed upon her to marvel with astonishment; and when at length she was loosed from the rack and condemned to be beheaded, such happiness filled her soul that she uttered aloud praise and gratitude

to Christ, her only Spouse, for deigning now to summon her to the heavenly nuptials.

Among those who gave their lives for the faith at *Rome*, we have St Sebastian and St Agnes ; and in *Sicily*, St Lucy.

St Sebastian was an officer in the Roman army, and esteemed by all for his candour, manly bearing, and courage ; nor was he less a champion in the cause of Christ. Many who would otherwise have fallen from the faith, encouraged by his entreaties and aided by his prayers, persevered to the end. And when it came to his turn to make confession of the faith that was in him, he displayed the fortitude of the true soldier of Christ. He was condemned to be stripped, bound to a stake, and shot at with arrows, but, to prolong his agony, no vital spot was aimed at. At length, from utter exhaustion and loss of blood, his head drooped, and he was left for dead. He, however, so far recovered that he was able to stand once again before the Emperor, whom he entreated with all the ardour of his soul to put a stop to the cruel persecution. Yet his petition served but to bring about his being sentenced a second time. He was condemned to be beaten to death with clubs, and thus he merited the crown of a twofold martyrdom.

St Agnes, an ornament to the city of Rome by reason of her wealth, beauty, and virtue, was barely thirteen years old when she was brought to the altar of Minerva and commanded to offer incense by the Governor, whose son she had refused to marry on the plea that she was already promised to another spouse. The Governor ordered her to sacrifice at once and renounce the impious sect of Christians, under pain of losing her fortune and of being subjected to the most cruel tortures. Finding his orders and threats and promises equally despised by a weak girl, he had her dragged to a house of ill-fame, in the hope that she would be brought to relent on seeing her virtue, which she prized so highly, exposed to certain loss. But she answered him : “ Jesus Christ is too jealous of the chastity of His spouses to let them be robbed of so beautiful a virtue. Christ will guard His own.” And so it was. Of those who came to insult her, the ringleader was struck blind upon the spot, and his companions, alarmed at what they saw, withdrew in terror. She was then condemned to be beheaded ; but such a fear came over her executioner that his hand began to tremble, and not till he had been calmed and encouraged by Agnes herself could he strike the fatal blow. The saint was buried on the Nomentan road, and will ever remain one of the chief glories of Rome.

The trials of St. Lucy in *Sicily* bear a strong resemblance to those of St Agnes. She too was sought in marriage by a certain youth, who, unable to win her consent, accused her of being a Christian. By a special miracle also she was saved from injury to her purity, and finally condemned to be burnt alive. Yet the fire kindled about her hurt her not, and only when a sword was plunged into her heart did she yield up her pure soul to her heavenly Spouse.

In *Spain*, St Vincent, deacon of the Church of Saragossa, was

put to death with the most unrelenting ferocity. Amid prolonged and cruel torments, during which his body was almost torn asunder, he remained unmoved, with his eyes raised to heaven. At length he died with a smile on his lips and joy depicted on his countenance.

While St Agnes was triumphing at Rome, another holy virgin, St Eulalia, was adding glory to the Church in Spain. A descendant of a noble family and a Christian, she received her crown at Merida, the capital of the province of Lusitania. When the edicts of Diocletian were published in that province, Eulalia, then but twelve years old, took warning and prepared herself for the coming struggle. She had not long to wait before she was arrested as a Christian and brought before the Governor, who, pitying her tender years, at first tried what he could do by gentleness, and represented to her the wrong she was about to do herself, and the pain she would bring on her parents if she persisted in her disobedience. Finding that his representations and persuasions were without effect, he next resorted to threats, and sought to terrify her by displaying before her eyes the instruments of torture that would be employed in overcoming her obstinacy. Even under this trial her constancy remained unshaken. The angry Governor then ordered her sides to be torn with iron hooks, and torches to be applied to her gaping wounds, all which she bore without a murmur. In the end she died, overcome with smoke and flames, and was buried by the faithful near the place of her martyrdom.

As might have been expected after a long interval of rest the number of those Christians who apostatised (*lapsi*) was greater than in any of the previous persecutions. Many, without absolutely denying their faith, surrendered the sacred vessels, betrayed the names of their brethren, or gave up the Sacred Scriptures to be destroyed in order that they themselves might escape torture and death. Such, in history, are known by the name of "*tradidores*." Yet, in the midst of almost inconceivable tortures, the great majority remained faithful, a fact to which contemporary writers bear the most convincing evidence.

CHAPTER XV

END OF THE TENTH PERSECUTION—EDICT OF MILAN —TRIUMPH OF CONSTANTINE

IN 305 Diocletian laid down his authority and compelled Maximian to do likewise. Both retired into private life. The supreme power was transferred to Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, the two Caesars, who now assumed the title of *Augusti*, and continued to rule, Galerius in the East with Licinius and his nephew Maximian as Caesars, and Constantius in the West with Severus as Caesar. Constantine and Maxentius were the sons and heirs of Constantius and Maximian respectively.

Galerius and his colleagues continued the persecution in the East, but rendered it less severe by substituting mutilation and condemnation to the mines for the death penalty. Yet the other tortures of which we have made frequent mention, and the death penalty, did not altogether disappear. The persecution was continued down to 311, when Galerius, whose reign was now fast coming to a close, recognising his folly in trying to accomplish the impossible, published an edict in his own name and that of his colleagues, permitting the Christians to assemble for religious purposes and to rebuild their churches, on condition that they did nothing to disturb the peace and order of the State. At this time Galerius was suffering from a loathsome disease, and, in granting this liberty to the Christians, he besought them to pray to their God for his welfare.

On the death of Galerius, Maximin, to the prejudice of the other Caesar, Licinius, usurped the chief power in the East, and in 312 reopened the persecution.

Constantius Chlorus, the Emperor of the West, died in 306 at York ; but his mild administration was continued by his son Constantine, who had hastened to Britain and been proclaimed Emperor by the army ; and in Britain, Gaul, and Spain, Christianity was left to breathe freely. Maxentius (306–312), who had been proclaimed *Augustus* at Rome, was too much given up to a life of debauchery and pleasure to trouble himself about persecuting the Christians, so that, throughout Italy and Africa, the Church enjoyed at least a relative tolerance.

The proclamation of Constantine as *Augustus* was the signal for a great and bitter contest for the Empire. The unworthy Maxentius, believing himself more strongly supported than Constantine, threw down the statues of the latter in Rome ; but his days were numbered. Constantine, taking his action as a declaration of war, put himself at the head of his army, and directed his march towards the Alps. One day, while on the march, both he and his soldiers saw above the sun a luminous cross bearing the inscription “τοντῷ νίκα” (*By this conquer*). That night, still perplexed by the vision, he fell asleep, when Christ appeared to him in a dream and bade him make a standard on the model of the cross he had seen, and bear it against Maxentius and all his enemies in the full assurance of victory. Convinced by this double vision of the truth of Christianity, Constantine lost no time in causing to be made the sacred symbol which at once formed a cross and the monogram ☧ composed of the first two letters of the name of Christ (χριστός) in Greek letters : this was the *Labarum*, which continued to be the standard of the Empire. He then continued his march with the sacred emblem borne at the head of his army.

The two armies met not far from the capital, near the Milvian Bridge, on the 28th October, 312. Maxentius, although his army was much superior in point of numbers to that of Constantine, was utterly routed, and perished in the waters of the Tiber, into which

he was pressed, with many of his men, by the irresistible onrush of Constantine. The conqueror entered Rome triumphantly, and was acclaimed by Christian and pagan alike.

Constantine's victory meant the triumph of the persecuted Church. He forthwith proclaimed toleration for the Christians ; and in January 313 appeared the celebrated *Edict of Milan*, signed by himself and his friend and brother-in-law, Licinius, granting full religious liberty, and ordering the immediate restitution to the Church of all confiscated property. At the demand of his colleagues, Maximin, too, put an end to the persecution in his provinces, and thus, for a time, religious peace reigned from one end of the Empire to the other.

Soon, however, Maximin, humiliated by the defeat of his ally Maxentius, and jealous of the glory with which Constantine and Licinius had covered themselves, invaded the provinces of Licinius, who had not yet returned to the East ; but he was defeated by Licinius, and poisoned himself. With the overthrow of Maximin, the Roman Empire remained divided between Constantine and Licinius.

Licinius, now sole master of the East, began to look with a jealous eye on the growing power and popularity of Constantine. A struggle for supremacy was inevitable. Even before the year 314 came to a close, it broke out, and Licinius, though defeated, was not crushed. He now meditated revenge ; and to this end began to persecute the Christians, knowing well that Constantine, in his eagerness to defend them, would give him the opportunity for renewing hostilities. He expelled the Christians from the palace, from the army, and from their Churches, and forbade the bishops to assemble in council. Those who refused to obey he either banished, or cast into prison, or put to death.

Among those who died during this period of the persecution are to be numbered certain bishops, as well as the *Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*. These forty were all soldiers quartered at Sebaste in Armenia ; and when the legion to which they belonged was ordered to sacrifice, they stood apart and refused to deny their faith by obeying the unjust command. For their refusal they were condemned to be scourged, and then to be led together to a cruel and lingering death. It was the depth of winter ; and while still bleeding from their scourging, they were exposed naked for a whole night on the ice to be slowly frozen to death. Near the pond was a warm bath placed ready as a temptation to induce them to deny their faith. But all advanced joyfully to their sufferings with a prayer to God for strength : " Forty we have come to the combat, grant that forty may be crowned." The soldier told off to guard them was filled with astonishment on seeing, in the middle of the night, a bright light in the heavens, and angels descending bearing in their hands thirty-nine crowns. While he was wondering what the vision could mean, there staggered up to him one of the forty, praying to be led to the bath as he could bear his sufferings no longer. So moved was the soldier by what he had

witnessed that he now boldly declared himself a Christian, and with the thirty-nine gave his life for the faith. The number was complete. The pleasure of the unfortunate soldier who yielded was but short-lived, for hardly had his body touched the warm water in the bath when he died.

All befell as Licinius had foreseen. Constantine took up arms both from policy and in the interest of religion. Licinius was defeated near Adrianople and again, in 323, at Byzantium. He was forced to cast himself at the feet of the conqueror and sue for his life, a favour granted to him in consideration of his wife, Constantia, the sister of Constantine. From his place of confinement at Thessalonica he was later suspected of intrigue and conspiracy, on which plea he was beheaded. The defeat and death of Licinius thus left Constantine master of the Roman world. Although it does not appear that he had at that time declared himself a candidate for the Christian religion, yet he always showed sympathy towards it, and was its avowed champion and protector.

When we consider the result of the persecutions of the first three centuries, we cannot but be struck by the fact that the blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of Christianity. The spread of the faith throughout and beyond the bounds of the Empire had gone on steadily in spite of, nay rather in proportion to, the opposition it continued to meet with, and the direct efforts of the ruling powers ruthlessly to suppress it. "All your ingenious cruelties," writes Tertullian, "can accomplish nothing; they are only a lure to this sect. Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the Christians is their seed." Yet the religion of Christ offered no seductions to the corrupt desires of the human heart. It rather struck at the very root of self-indulgence, luxury, and pride, by requiring of its followers modesty and purity, self-denial and temperance, humility and submission.

Already flourishing in Pontus and Bithynia at the time when Pliny was Imperial Legate, it rapidly spread throughout the East, where we see its anchorites beginning to people the deserts, its schools, directed by illustrious doctors, confounding paganism, and whole countries confessing the name of Jesus Christ. Maximin, in his rescript addressed to the prefect Sabinus after the edict of Milan, putting an end to the persecution in his province, says: "Almost all men have abandoned the worship of the gods for the sect of the Christians."

The same, too, was taking place in the West. In Rome itself, under Pope St Sylvester (314-335), there were as many as forty churches. In Gaul, the story of the martyrs under Aurelian had reference only to the Churches of Lyons and Vienne. Other Churches existed; and St Denis, or Dionysius, the first Bishop of Paris, is said to have suffered martyrdom on the hill which, from that circumstance, received the name of Montmartre. In the extreme west of the Empire we find the Church, in the middle of the third

century, in a flourishing state. In Britain, according to the historian Gildas, many, both priests and laics, were put to death in 304 ; and forests and caverns which served as places of refuge for the Christians seemed more thickly peopled than the towns themselves. In Africa, in spite of persecutions, Christianity attracted to itself not only slaves and women and children, but illustrious orators and lawyers, celebrated doctors, and men learned in the sciences. Half the Empire, at the time of Constantine's conversion, is believed to have been Christian.

By their sufferings and death the martyrs proved the Divinity of the Christian religion, in thus literally fulfilling in their own persons a prophecy foretold by our Lord Himself : " Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Men will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son ; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. If the world hate you, know ye that it hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress ; but have confidence, I have overcome the world " (Matt. x. ; John xv.).

They proved the same truths by their superhuman endurance and constancy. Even the pagans recognised this, and were converted to the faith by the sight of their constancy in the midst of tortures. " The constancy with which you reproach us," writes Tertullian, " is a lesson. On beholding it, who is not inclined to ask its cause ? Any man who examines our religion embraces it. He at the same time desires to suffer in order to purchase, by the shedding of his blood, the friendship of God and the forgiveness of his offences."

How decisive, too, was the victory gained by Christianity over the powers that rose up to destroy it ; yet, although it might have done, it never opposed force to force ! We see in the conflict a war, as it were, between two powers, one of which inflicts death without receiving it, and the other receives death without inflicting it ; yet the one which suffers death triumphs over the one which slays. This fact, unique in the history of the world, can be explained only by recognising the supernatural intervention of Providence, seeing that there is no proportion between the effect produced and natural causes.*

The very name *martyr* means witness ; but it is especially applied to those who have suffered tortures and even death, in testimony

* See Marion, *Histoire de l'Église*, I., 171.

of the truth of religion and of the facts on which Christianity is based ; and to show that the Church was not to be without its witnesses, its martyrs, we again give the words of our Blessed Lord : " You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth " (Acts i. 8).

CHAPTER XVI

THE CATACOMBS

WE cannot leave the persecutions without a word on the *Catacombs*, with which the persecutions are so intimately connected, and which disclose to us the inner life of the Christians at Rome during the first three centuries of the Christian era.

" Represent to yourself a subterranean city of many miles in extent, with its different wards, known by illustrious names ; its numerous inhabitants of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions ; its public squares, its crossings, its chapels, its churches ; its paintings, a living picture of the sentiments of the generations whose abode it was ; its numberless streets or galleries ranged above one another to the number of four and even five, sometimes low and narrow, sometimes high and wide, sometimes straight, sometimes crooked, running in all directions, intersecting one another, mingling with one another, like the passages of an immense labyrinth ; these galleries, these squares, these chapels lighted up from without, at various intervals, by openings in the surface of the soil, and from within by millions of earthen or bronze lamps, having the shape of a little boat ; everywhere, to the right and to the left, tombs cut horizontally in the sides of these galleries, even to the spring of the arches ; these galleries themselves so numerous and extensive that, if they were placed in a line, they would form a street of nine hundred miles in length, bordered with six million tombs. Represent to yourself the Early Christians here, our ancestors and our models, pure as angels, obliged to conceal themselves in order to escape the contagion and the fury of pagan society.

" The word *Catacomb* means, in general, a cave, a cemetery, and is applied, in religious language, to those vast excavations in which the Early Christians sought a refuge from persecution and buried the bodies of their companions and martyrs. There are catacombs in many great cities, as Naples, Syracuse, Carthage, Alexandria, etc. Those of Rome are the most celebrated and most venerable ; for these immense vaults are exclusively the work of our ancestors in the Faith," and are found in every direction around the walls of Rome to the number of about forty in all.

Besides serving as a retreat for the faithful in times of persecution, and as the cemeteries or " sleeping-places " of their dead, they formed a sanctuary for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, where those who had not yet been baptised received the regenerating waters of Baptism, and where all could assemble to listen to the

instructions of their bishop, whose body not infrequently bore the marks of his suffering for the faith which he preached to them.

" In nearly all catacombs we meet halls, sometimes very spacious, of a more or less regular shape, which can have served only for the reunions called *Synaxes*, or for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. These halls, always deprived of the light of day, were lighted up by *lamps* suspended from the roof, some of which have lately been found still in their places. At other times, these lamps were fixed in little niches, which are yet to be met by hundreds. There were some halls that admitted the daylight by an opening from the roof out on the country above. . . .

" Yet these halls in the Catacombs, with or without air-shafts, required to be continually lighted up by lamps, for the accomplishment of the duties of piety and the mysteries of religion. Hence the immense number of lamps found in the Catacombs. Hence, also, without any doubt, the usage which is maintained in the Church, of having *lighted tapers* at the celebration of the holy offices : a venerable usage, which recalls, even at the present day, so many ages after Christianity has obtained permission to profess its worship in the sunlight, those times of misery and trial when it was obliged to hide itself in the dark caverns of the earth.

" Independently of these halls, more or less spacious, cut out of the tufa . . . with pillars of the same tufa supporting the arches, there are met little edifices, partly hollowed out, partly built, which undoubtedly offer us the most ancient models of Christian churches to be found on the earth."*

The walls in nearly all the galleries are lined with niches formed in the tufa, and intended for the reception of the dead. The graves rise in tiers forming sometimes five sometimes six rows of niches, and are closed with tiles or marble slabs generally bearing inscriptions or Christian emblems, that of the martyr, for example, being indicated by a palm engraved in the stone. Social distinctions were completely absent from the tombs of the early Christians.

Moreover on the tombs, vases, glasses, lamps, etc., are to be found depicted in colours or otherwise, the most striking and appropriate subjects from the Old and the New Testament.

Common symbols from the Old Testament most frequently met with are " Noe saved from the flood, and the dove bearing in its beak an olive branch," " Abraham's sacrifice," " the Manna," " the three children in the fiery furnace," " Daniel in the lions' den," " Jonas saved from the whale's belly," etc.

The favourite symbols referring to our Lord are His representation as the Good Shepherd, the Anchor, and the Fish, the Greek word for which is 'Ιχθύς, a word made up of the initial letters that compose our Lord's name and title, Ιησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱος Σωτῆρ, " Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." The principal traits of our Saviour are also found represented, those scenes chiefly being depicted which show Him to us as the Teacher, and the Physician

* See Gaume, *Catechism of Perseverance*, III, 66 sqq.

of our souls. Especially familiar is the representation of Him as "the Good Shepherd bearing the lost sheep," "the Samaritan woman," "the healing of the paralytic," "His restoring sight to the blind," "the raising of Lazarus from the dead," "the multiplication of the loaves and fishes," "turning water into wine," etc. There are also places in the Catacombs where fountains and cisterns are found, which show by more than one arrangement that they served for the administration of baptism.

"The discoveries of the catacombs bear important testimony both to the practice and the belief of the early Christians. They show and illustrate to us the belief of the early Church in the Primacy of St Peter, the various orders of the hierarchy, the Sacrament of Baptism, the forgiveness of sins, the Blessed Eucharist, the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the resurrection of Christ, the veneration of the holy Mother of God and of the Saints, supplication for the departed, etc. Thus the catacombs are lasting monuments affording the most unmistakable evidence that the Catholic Church of to-day is one in faith and dogma with the Church of the first century."*

CHAPTER XVII

HERESIES OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

CERINTHIANS, EBIONISTS, DOCETAE

THOUGH Christ came for the salvation of all men, yet we learn from the words of Simeon's prophecy that many, through their own wilful blindness and folly, would not believe in Him nor receive His doctrine, which would therefore turn to their ruin : "Behold this Child is set for the *fall* and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted" (Luke ii. 34); and is it not true that, from the beginning, the Church has shared these contradictions with her Divine Founder ?

We have seen the powers of this world combine to overthrow her ; yet for three centuries, in spite of persecution, we behold this new religion, weak to all appearances, and deprived of human support, stand out above the ruins of Jerusalem and of the Temple, above the abandoned temples of paganism, her would-be destroyers. These were her formidable opponents from without, but foes still more insidious threatened her from within, viz., her own rebellious children, those so-called Christians who, with their errors and heresies, dealt her blows more terrible and more pitiful than the fiercest persecutions had been able to inflict upon her. Yet she continued to rise, secure against all the dangers which threatened to overwhelm her, fully assured that not idolatry, nor heresy, nor error, shall at any time prevail against her : "Upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18).

"As fire," says St Augustine, "is necessary to purify silver and separate it from the dross, so heresies are necessary to prove the good

* See Birkhäuser, *History of the Church*, 121.

Christians among the bad, and to separate true from false doctrine ; " they do not, therefore, injure such as are firm in the faith, but tend to render them more steadfast and illustrious.

" Many and great were the advantages which resulted to the Church through these heresies ; for whilst the heretics sought to pervert the true doctrine, the Church so much the more busied herself in defining, explaining and substantiating it. Her conflicts with heresy occasioned what may be properly called the development of the doctrines of the Church. The doctrine of Christ, while remaining one and immutable, gradually acquired more appropriate expression and more definite precision."* The history of heresies, then, serves to show that the doctrines which the Church teaches us to-day are the selfsame doctrines that were delivered to her by Jesus Christ Himself.

Now as Infidelity supposes the previous absence of the true faith, Heresy supposes its pre-existence, but the subsequent rejection of one or more revealed truths, and must not be confounded with Schism, which strikes a blow at the outward unity of the Church. Schism, which means a cleaving or rending asunder, is a separation from the Church by reason of a revolt against her in her capacity of ruler, and generally ends in heresy.

Even in the days of the Apostles heresies had begun to arise, as we gather from their Epistles, in which we find them denouncing in the strongest terms the heretics of their day. In his 2nd Epistle St Peter cautions the faithful against teachers of false doctrines, particularly against the *Simonites*, or the followers of Simon Magus. St John wrote his Gospel against *Cerinthus* and *Ebion*, and their disciples, who denied the Divinity of Christ ; and in his 1st Epistle he sets forth the mystery of the Incarnation against them, as also against Basilides and the *Docetae* who denied that Christ had a true body. The design of St Jude's Epistle was to give to all true Christians a horror of the doctrines and practices of such as, having the name of Christians, had become a scandal to religion.

Simon Magus, who is called the master and founder of all heretics, was a native of Samaria, and was converted to Christianity, as we have already seen, by St Philip the deacon. We have seen him, too, offering money to SS Peter and John in the hope of obtaining from them in exchange the power of conferring the Holy Spirit, and we can recall the severe rebuke given him by St Peter. He then cut himself off from the Apostles and from the faith, and became the founder of the sect called after him, *Simonites* or *Simonians*. He gave himself out as the *Messias*, asserting that he was an incarnation of God, and styled himself the great power of God. He taught the transmigration of souls, but denied the resurrection of the body and the necessity of good works. He asserted that all our works were indifferent, thus destroying the principle of sound morality. He

* See Birkhäuser, *History of the Church*, 122.

first preached his doctrines in Samaria and Judaea, then leaving the East, he is said to have gone to Rome in the reign of Claudius, there to spread his errors. But his meeting with St Peter, as also his attempted flight, can hardly be said to be historically exact.

The story, however, is as follows. On a certain occasion Simon announced that, as a proof of his divinity and to confirm his doctrine by a miracle, he would raise himself in the air in presence of the Emperor, the Senate, and the whole city. SS Peter and Paul, who were at that time in Rome, and had heard of his intentions, prayed God to confound the wicked imposition and expose the fraud. When Simon had raised himself to a certain height, he was suddenly brought down in answer to their prayers, and, falling to the ground, broke his legs. He was then borne off, mad with rage, by his disciples, and afterwards cast himself in despair from the top of his house, thus putting an end to his own life.

The *Nicolaites* should be ranked as disciples of Simon Magus, whose illusions and impostures they more or less shared. Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, is claimed, probably falsely, as their founder.

Although the Jewish Christians continued to observe the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law, they afterwards separated into two distinct classes. One, though following the Mosaic Law, did not insist upon its observance as necessary for salvation ; the other maintained that the Law was strictly binding on all, and wished to impose it on the Gentile converts. But this difference caused a further schism in the Church itself. Those who adhered to the Mosaic Law divided again into two sects, the *Nazareans*, who adhered to the whole Christian faith without giving up the character and customs of the Jews, although they did not impose these on the Gentile converts ; and the heretical sect called *Ebionists*, the true successors of St Paul's great opponents. These latter maintained that the Mosaic Law was still binding, and regarded its observance as a condition of salvation ; they moreover denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ, teaching that our Saviour was a mere man who had no existence before He was born of Joseph and Mary, as they held, and that the Son of God came to Him in His baptism.

Cerinthus, the founder of the sect called *Cerinthians*, was another heretic of the Apostolic age, and came from Alexandria to Ephesus when St John was residing there. In most of his teaching he bore the greatest resemblance to the Ebionists. With them he maintained the necessity of observing the Mosaic Law, and affirmed that Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary, was but a mere man on whom Christ descended at the time of John's baptism, and that He returned to heaven at the crucifixion.

The *Docetae* went to the opposite extreme ; for while the Ebionists and the Cerinthians maintained that the Divine Spirit came to abide in the man Jesus at the time of His baptism, the Docetae taught that the Incarnation was a mere appearance under which God was revealed to man. The word *Docetae* comes from the Greek

δοκέω (*I appear*), and is applied to the sect of heretics who, as early as the first century, tried to explain the Incarnation by maintaining that our Lord's human nature and form were only *apparent*; hence that His actions and sufferings were only in appearance. The most effective reply to these heresies lies in the words of St John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John i.).

CHAPTER XVIII

HERESIES OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES (continued)

Gnosticism*—THE MANICHEANS

THE earliest heresies are to be traced to the mixture of Jewish and heathen elements with Christian doctrine; the Judaisers clinging to the forms which were superseded by Christianity, while the heathen converts brought in portions of their own superstitions, and still more of their philosophy. The Judaising and heathen corruptions may be roughly denoted by the general names *Ebionism* and *Gnosticism*; but the systems had common elements from the first. We have already spoken of the primitive forms of Ebionism; the other heresies of the first three centuries may nearly all be included under the general class *Gnosticism*.

The term *Gnosticism* is derived from the Greek word γνῶσις (*gnōsis*), meaning knowledge. This, with the Gnostics, meant a knowledge superior to, or at least co-ordinate with, *faith* in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. It was thus an attempt to mould Christianity into a scientific form in which human philosophy claimed a place at least as high as Divine revelation. Even in the Apostolic age it would appear to have grown into some sort of system, as we gather from St Paul's words to Timothy: "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge (*gnōsis*) falsely so called; which some promising, have erred concerning the faith" (I Tim. vi. 20, 21).

In their attempt, then, to reconcile Christian dogma with human reason, and to blend with the faith of Christ many obscure and fantastic theories derived from the pagan philosophies and the various religious systems of the East, the Gnostics formulated a system which, founded on the pride of *knowledge* in opposition to a standard of *faith*, was naturally destined to branch out into many sects. These, as marked by varieties of opinion, may be divided into: (1) The *Alexandrian School*; (2) The *Syrian School*; (3) The School which sprang up in *Asia Minor*.

Among the various forms of Gnostic doctrines we may trace these leading principles: (1) The Supreme God (*Bythos*, depth), infinitely separated from the material creation; (2) from Bythos emanated a series of divine spirits, or inferior deities, called "*Aeons*";

* See Smith's *Students' Ecclesiastical History*, 211 sqq.

(3) The *Dualism* and essential opposition of Spirit and Matter ; (4) The idea of a *Demiurgus*, or Creator and Ruler of the material world ; (5) Bythos, the Supreme God, sent down Christ, the highest Aeon, who, according to the Alexandrian Gnostics, united Himself with the man Jesus at His baptism in the Jordan, but left Him at His crucifixion. The Syrian branch of Gnostics, on the contrary, taught that Christ had no real body, but assumed only the *appearance* or phantom of a body. *Docetism*, or the doctrine of the Docetae, was the common doctrine of most of the Gnostics.

Gnosticism, which dates from Apostolic times, reached its highest point in the second and third centuries, and gradually disappeared towards the end of the fourth century. Many Gnostics remained—outwardly at least—united to the Church, and passed themselves off as Christians.

THE MANICHEANS.—During the latter part of the third century, Gnosticism assumed a different phase, when a new Gnosticism, or more correctly speaking a new religion, arose on the doctrines of one *Manes*.

Greek writers state that Manes derived his religious notions from the four books of an Arabian merchant of Alexandria, a contemporary of the Apostles. These books were afterwards carried into Persia and became the foundation of Manes' teaching. But the Oriental account ascribes the origin of the heresy to Manes, or Mani, himself, who was a learned magician of Persia and became a convert to Christianity, but was afterwards excommunicated on account of his opinions. Both accounts, however, agree in this, that Manes began to spread his doctrines in Persia about the year 270. At first he met with a favourable reception from the Persian king, but was later put to death by the same monarch, whose son he had allowed to die after a vain boast that he could heal him. The king had Manes flayed alive (277), and his skin stuffed with straw and publicly exposed, as a warning to all such pretenders and impostors.

No sect during the first three centuries equalled, in power or extent, that of the Manicheans ; none afterwards, with the exception of Arianism and Protestantism, threatened greater danger to the Church. Hardly was its founder dead when we see it extending in the East as far as India and China, and to the West throughout the whole of the Roman Empire. In North Africa it was condemned by an edict of Diocletian (287), not as a form of Christianity, but as coming from the hostile empire of Persia ; yet the continued prevalence of the heresy in Africa is proved from the fact that St Augustine followed it for nine years. Although persecuted with extreme rigour, although split into many secondary sects, it continued to hold its own for a thousand years, at one time boldly appearing in the open, at another, like some secret society, hiding its head in shadow and mystery. Though it seemed to disappear for a time as a distinct sect, we find it appearing again under different names in Spain in the sixth century, in Bulgaria and Italy in the tenth, and

in France among the Albigenses in the twelfth. Its development and long continuance can be accounted for from the following reasons: the powerful organisation of the sect, which was drawn up on that of the Church; the charm of its secret initiation; the hope of finding in it a certain solution to all difficulties whether scientific or religious; the austerity, apparent or real, of the *elect*, which attracted the nobly disposed or the proud; the infamous debaucheries of the greater number, which flattered or satisfied the voluptuous.

MANICHEAN DOCTRINES.—The Manichean system teaches the doctrine of pure Dualism—the co-existence of two eternal principles essentially opposed to each other, the one the author of all good, the other the author of all evil. There exist, then, from all eternity, two original and independent kingdoms in constant opposition to each other, the Kingdom of Light under the dominion of God, who is the principle of Light, and whose essence is the purest light without bodily form; and the Kingdom of Darkness or Matter (*hylè*), ruled over by Satan, the principle of Darkness. The first, surrounded by good *Aeons*, who owe their existence to Him, dwells in the higher regions, resplendent with eternal light; the second, with the wicked *Aeons* which he has produced, inhabits the lower regions, where thickest darkness prevails. In the Kingdom of Light reigns perpetual peace, in marked contrast with the internal conflicts that for ever rage in the Kingdom of Darkness. It chanced, however, that a party of dark spirits, who had been worsted in one of these conflicts, sought refuge among the lofty mountains that separated the two worlds, and from their point of vantage gained a view of the hitherto unsuspected World of Light. The discovery was made known to their kindred spirits, who agreed to lay aside all internal enmities and make a combined attack on the newly discovered kingdom. The two sovereignties were henceforth to be in constant opposition to each other.

To resist the invasion of His kingdom, God formed from His own pure essence of Light the “Soul of the World,” from which emanated the Primal Man, whom the Manicheans regard as the Christ, and whom God sent to combat the powers of Darkness. To aid him in the conflict God also sent the “Living Spirit.” The powers of Darkness were defeated, but even in their defeat they succeeded in carrying off and absorbing a portion of the Light. Out of the remnants of the Light which he had saved, the Living Spirit formed the Sun and the Moon, and settled Primitive Man therein. Henceforth it was God’s purpose in the struggle to rescue, and of the Demon to detain, the heavenly particles of Light which had been imprisoned in Matter. From the intermingling of the two principles resulted the actual world, composed of good and bad elements; while further, from the good principle are derived the souls of men and Christianity, and from the bad proceed Matter, Paganism, and Judaism.

To prevent the escape of light, Satan formed Adam and Eve; in body, according to his own image; in their luminous parts, according

to the image of God ; and in order that he might keep the luminous particles more closely imprisoned in Matter, he tempted them to sin. So that evil, which reigns supreme in the regions beneath the earth, preponderates on earth, is less in the stars, but has no existence at all in the sun or in the moon, or in the higher regions where pure and perpetual light shines.

To recover the imprisoned souls Christ came down upon the earth from the sun, and assumed a human form, the *appearance* only of a body, to proclaim to mankind the existence and the difference of the two kingdoms, and to instruct them as to the means of their redemption. But the Manicheans denied the Incarnation, and with it the reality of Christ's suffering and death. They asserted, too, that, as the doctrine of Christ was not fully understood even by the Apostles, Christ promised to send the Paraclete, who was either Manes himself or dwelt in him.

After death, those souls that have remained pure and unstained are instantly set free from the material world, and translated to the sun where they remain eternally happy. In the case of the rest of mankind who are less sanctified, they are condemned to return to the earth in other forms, and, by transmigration into plants, animals, or men, to accomplish their purification. If they succeed in this, they are finally received into the sun ; but if to the end they continue perverse, they are cast for ever into the region of darkness. When the world has finished its course, it will be consumed with fire till only one inert mass remains.

The conflict we have described was confined not only to the human race, but extended to all animate beings, seeing that some of the particles of Life and Light were inherent in both the animal and the vegetable world ; hence it was that to the Manicheans both animal and vegetable life were sacred, and had it not been for the Dualism that existed in the sect itself, it could not have continued to subsist. They were divided into two distinct classes, the "Elect" or perfect (*Electi*) and the "Hearers" (*Auditores*). The latter could only hope for pardon and salvation by serving the elect.

The spirit of the morality of the Manichean elect consisted in the observance of these three seals : (1) The *Signaculum oris*, which required abstention from obscene words, from blasphemy, especially blasphemy against the Paraclete ; also from wine, flesh, fish, eggs, and milk. They had to lead a contemplative life, to exercise no profession, to pluck no fruits nor to gather the vegetables that were even necessary for their subsistence, on account of the souls that might be enclosed in the fruits of the earth ; (2) The *Signaculum manuum*, which implied abstention from agriculture and all manual works ; (3) The *Signaculum sinus*, which required abstinence from marriage and all sensual pleasures, since the procreation of children meant the confining of souls, daughters of Light, in the cursed prison of the human body. The "Hearers," however, were permitted to eat animal food, to drink wine, to engage in the various occupations of life, and to marry, yet not without contracting sin, since every work

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which brought them into contact with things material was regarded as evil. They ministered to the "Elect" and supplied them with the produce of the earth which they might not gather for themselves : the prayers of the "Elect" served to atone for the sins of the "Hearers." Manichean asceticism eventually degenerated into the grossest license.

The Manichean Church was carefully organised, and soon after the death of Manes reached its highest state of development. From the ranks of the "Elect" were drawn all the members of the hierarchy. At its head came the Chief Priest, the successor of Manes, and twelve "Magistri," representing Christ and His twelve Apostles. In addition to these were seventy-two bishops, probably in memory of the seventy-two disciples ; and under these again came an indefinite number of priests and deacons. Their worship was simple, with an absence of all solemnity. In the initiation of the "Elect" baptism was administered, but with oil instead of water ; and in their Eucharist, water took the place of wine. Manes rejected the Old Testament and the greater part of the New ; but, since he regarded himself as the Paraclete, he claimed for his own teaching the authority of revelation.

CHAPTER XIX

HERESIES OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES (continued)

THE MONTANISTS—THE ANTITRINITARIANS (UNITARIANS)

MONTANUS, the founder of the *Montanists*, was a native of Mysia in Phrygia, and before his conversion to Christianity is said to have been a priest of the goddess Cybele. After his conversion he claimed to be inspired as a prophet, and, about the middle of the third century, founded the sect called after him. His strange ecstasies he pretended to be the workings of the Spirit, who had sent him to comfort the Church in her time of need, and whose organ he announced himself to be. From our Lord's words : "I have yet many things to say to you ; but you cannot hear them now ; but when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will teach you all truth" (John xvi. 12, 13), he concluded that Revelation, as it stood, was incomplete ; the mission of perfecting the Church belonged to the Paraclete. The age of the Spirit was come, and Christ's promises in regard to the Paraclete were fulfilled in him. The fanaticism spread, and many of the more ardent spirits adopted the doctrine of the new dispensation of the Spirit.

Calling themselves the last prophets, Montanus and his two companions, Priscilla and Maximilla, two ladies of distinction, who had left their husbands to follow him, began to prophesy under the influence, they said, of the Holy Ghost, and to teach things contrary to the belief and practice of the Church. They announced the coming of the end of the world, and called upon all to enter upon a

more holy and austere life. Their system (1) required longer and more rigorous fasts ; (2) forbade second marriages ; (3) taught that mortal sin committed after baptism could be remitted only by the prophets of the sect, not by Catholic priests ; (4) proscribed the arts, war, pleasure and amusement ; (5) taught that there was no absolution or pardon for those who, after baptism, were guilty of murder, impurity, or apostasy ; (6) forbade flight from persecution for the faith, enjoining rather that every means be sought for securing the crown of martyrdom.

The Montanists for a time remained attached to the Church, but regarded themselves as raised above the rest of the Church and as forming a more perfect body within it. But no sooner did the spirit of schism and heresy manifest itself than the bishops of Asia convoked several synods and cut them off from the Christian community. The Montanists then appealed to Rome against their decisions, but without effect. From the depth of their prison the martyrs of Lyons wrote against them, and sent St Irenaeus with a message to Pope Eleutherius, who condemned the heretics, as also did his successors Victor and Zephyrinus. After that they formed themselves into a Church apart, with Pepuza, a little town in Phrygia, as their centre. Hence it is that they are sometimes spoken of as Pepuzians or Phrygians. In Pepuza, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, resided their patriarch, the head of the sect, which they regarded as the only genuine Christian body.

These heretics later split into several sects, the best known being that of the Tertullianists, founded by the unfortunate Tertullian, who at the opening of the third century became a zealous advocate of their system. In spite of their divisions the Montanists spread over the Roman Empire, and did not disappear altogether till the end of the sixth century.

THE ANTITRINITARIANS (UNITARIANS).—The suppression of the dogma of the Trinity, in the name of a false reasoning, constitutes Unitarianism. The Unitarians admit only one Divine Being in a single person, because the Trinity appears to them to imperil the dogma of the unity of God.

The ancient Fathers do not express themselves very clearly in regard to the Trinity. They are orthodox in their doctrine, but their mode of expression, from the beginning, is not always fixed with precision. There is only one God : yet the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. These two statements admit of no question : it is in their reconciliation that the difficulty lies. But if the manner in which they explain themselves leaves something to be desired, they hold firmly to the doctrine itself. Their defence against opposition moulded the Catholic doctrine of Christ and the Trinity.

It was quite otherwise with the heretics who arose at the end of the second century. Instead of accepting what Tradition taught them, they submitted the dogma to a critical examination, and admitted

only what agreed with their principles, but rejected what was repugnant to them. Unable to understand how, in the Infinite Being, unity of nature can be reconciled with a trinity of persons, they reject either the unity of nature and the complete equality which flows as a necessary consequence among the persons, or the distinction of persons. The latter, or those who deny the distinction of persons, are called *Patripassiani*, and maintained that the Father and the Son are one and the same person. According to them, the Father (*Pater*), since He is not distinct from the Son and the Holy Ghost, must have suffered (*passus*) and died upon the Cross. In support of their view they appealed to the words of Christ, "I and the Father are one" (John x. 30), which they explained as a unity of essence as well as of person.

The former, or those who reject the unity of nature and the complete equality of the persons, are called *Subordinationiani*, because they distinguished Christ, the Word of God, by whom all things were made, both from the Father and from creatures, but deny His equality with the Father.*

The principal *Subordinationiani*, or those who deny the equality of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and maintain that Christ was but a mere man endowed with Divine power, are *Theodotus of Byzantium* and his disciple, another *Theodotus*, *Artemon*, and *Paul of Samosata*.

Theodotus of Byzantium, who had denied the faith in the persecution under Marcus Aurelius, came, in 192, to spread his doctrine in Rome. Charged with apostasy, he attempted to justify his denial of the faith by asserting that he had denied not God, but a *man*, whom he still held to be the supernaturally begotten Messias. His heresy was condemned by Pope St Victor who excommunicated him.

Theodotus the Younger, surnamed the Banker, was the author of the Melchisedechian heresy. He taught that Melchisedech was superior to Christ, since "being without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of time" (Heb. i. 3), he could not be a man, but was a heavenly power, a prince of the angelic host, who fulfilled in regard to the angels what Christ fulfilled in regard to man. On account of his heretical doctrine he was excommunicated.

Artemon, who also taught at Rome, contended that his views were those of the primitive Christians. Both he and his disciples boldly maintained that no one in the Church, before the time of Pope Zephyrinus, had taught the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and that this dogma was not contained in the Scriptures. He was excommunicated by Zephyrinus.

Paul of Samosata, the proud Bishop of Antioch, further developed the teachings of this sect, and is the chief person connected with it. Converted from paganism to Christianity, the spirit of which he

* See Marion, *Histoire de l'Église*, I, 189, and Hedde, *Manuel d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, I, 127.

never really possessed, he became Bishop of Antioch in 260. He denied both the dogma of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation. He taught that there was only one Person, who in the Sacred Scriptures is called the Father, and that Christ, though Divinely conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, was but a mere man in whom the Word, the Wisdom of God, dwelt not as a person but as a quality or power. Still less, in his eyes, was the Holy Ghost a distinct person. His teaching was condemned by two Councils held at Antioch, and he was deposed by a third Council held in the same city. Protected by Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, he held possession of his episcopal residence until, owing to the defeat of his protectress by Aurelian in 272, he was compelled to leave Antioch. Pope Felix I confirmed the sentence passed by the bishops, and defined with precision the true doctrine. The Paulinist sect disappeared towards the end of the fourth century.

The principal *Patripassiani*, or those who, while acknowledging the Divinity of Christ, deny a distinction of persons in the Father and the Son, are *Praxeas*, *Noëtus*, and *Sabellius*. Since they upheld the absolute *Oneness* or Personal Unity of God, i.e., a unity not only of essence but of person, they are also called *Monarchians*.

Praxeas, coming from Asia Minor, where he had suffered as a confessor of the faith under Marcus Aurelius, settled in Rome (c. 192), and there began to spread his heretical views regarding the Trinity, teaching that Jesus Christ was God the Father made man. Called upon to recant, he at first submitted, but afterwards began to preach his former errors at Carthage, where he died.

Noëtus of Smyrna at the same time, i.e., at the end of the second century, taught the same doctrine in his own country, viz., that God the Father and God the Son were one and the same Person; that the same Divine Person considered in different relations is regarded as Father and Son, begotten and unbegotten, visible and invisible, changing His name according as He manifested Himself to the world. So that, in Christ, the Father was born and suffered and died. This heresy was condemned by Pope St Victor in a Roman synod.

Sabellius, a priest of Lybia, constituted himself at Rome the apostle of the Patripassiani. *Praxeas* and *Noëtus* do not mention the Holy Spirit, and thus reject all Trinity; but *Sabellius*, although he introduces the Holy Spirit into his system and admits a kind of Trinity, yet his is a Trinity not of Persons but of manifestations. He asserted that the Father was identical with the Son and with the Holy Spirit; that they were but three different modes of manifestation of the one Divine Being, the Father being God regarded as the Creator, the Son being God regarded as the Redeemer, the Holy Ghost being God regarded as the Sanctifier. *Sabellius* was excommunicated by Pope Calixtus.

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, wrote against the heresy, but apparently fell into the opposite error to the one he was opposing, since, in trying to show the reality of the distinction between the three

Persons, he appeared to divide the Divine nature. The expressions he made use of were condemned by his namesake, Pope St Dionysius, but he was not long in satisfactorily establishing his orthodoxy.

CHAPTER XX

SCHISMS OF NOVATUS AND NOVATIAN

IT was the manner of treatment adopted by the Church especially in regard to the "*lapsi*," or those who had fallen away in the persecutions, that brought about the schisms of Novatus at Carthage and Novatian at Rome. Novatus maintained that the "*lapsi*" should be admitted to communion with the Church without canonical penance being enforced. Novatian was entirely opposed to their readmission under any circumstances, and asserted that it was out of the power of the Church to pardon their offence.

NOVATUS, with four other priests, had been opposed to St Cyprian's election to the See of Carthage ; and when he found his opposition fruitless, he resolved to oust him from his bishopric.

We have seen how Cyprian, during the Decian persecution, withdrew for a time from Carthage that he might the better be able to govern the Church from a safe retreat till the danger was past. Taking advantage of his absence, Novatus and his companions rushed into open schism against him, and received a powerful ally to their cause in the person of Felicissimus, a wealthy deacon of Carthage. They were joined, too, by several "*lapsi*" who, relying merely on the recommendations of the martyrs and confessors, had been refused readmission to the Church. Cyprian required of them a certain period of public penance before he would readmit them into communion, as he did not regard the "*libelli pacis*" (letters of peace), obtained by them from confessors of the faith, as a sufficient recommendation for immediate absolution. Novatus and his party held the contrary opinion, and, in spite of the prohibition of their Bishop, admitted to the assembly of the faithful whoever presented himself armed with such a recommendation.

On one occasion Felicissimus openly opposed certain clerics whom the Bishop, from his retreat, had sent to Carthage to distribute alms to the poor. This time, however, sentence of excommunication was pronounced against him. It was the signal for open schism. Many sided with Felicissimus : the five priests named above ; confessors of the faith offended at the slight which, according to them, had been put upon their "*libelli pacis*" ; and especially the "*lapsi*," who were impatient at the delay in their readmission to the society of the faithful.

When Cyprian returned to Carthage at the end of the persecution (251), he tried to restore peace, and summoned a Council of bishops to settle once and for all the question of the "*lapsi*." Their policy met with the approval of the African Church. It was decreed that the "*libellatici*" were to be at once restored to the communion of

the faithful, but that the "sacrificati" were to be readmitted only after performing the usual course of penance. At a Council of bishops held in Rome, Pope St Cornelius gave his approval to the decree of the African bishops.

The leaders of the schism, Novatus, Felicissimus, and the other four priests, were excommunicated, whereupon Novatus, who was the most guilty party, set out for Rome, and there continued his intrigues. While Cyprian was away, Fortunatus, one of the excommunicated priests, put himself at the head of Cyprian's opponents, and even went so far as to have himself consecrated Bishop of Carthage during the lifetime of Cyprian; but the Pope refused to recognise the intruder, and his refusal hastened the end of the schism.

But before the African schism came to an end, another, still more formidable, instigated by Novatus, broke out in Rome. It was brought about by one NOVATIAN.

It was still the question of the treatment of the "lapsi" that gave rise to the schism of Novatian. The stricter party, urged on by the turbulent and factious Novatus, leagued themselves into a schismatical community under the name of *Cathari* or Puritans, and chose as their leader Novatian, a man of morose and gloomy temper, but of great talent and unbounded ambition. They denied all hope of receiving absolution to all such baptised Christians as had offered sacrifice, even though they had received the "libelli pacis."

Novatian was of Phrygian origin, but had studied at Rome, where, after abjuring paganism, he was ordained priest by Pope St Fabian. His pride was hurt when, on the death of Fabian, he saw Cornelius preferred before him for the See of Peter; and yielding to the wicked suggestions of Novatus, who found in him the man for his purpose, he contrived to secure episcopal consecration by three obscure Italian bishops, and proclaimed himself Bishop of Rome. In his name letters were sent to the various Churches, requiring submission to this, the first antipope; but Cornelius lost no time in informing them of the decrees passed against Novatian in the various councils, and excommunicated the impostor. His prompt action was the means of bringing back many into communion with their lawful Pontiff; yet Novatianism could not be suppressed.

According to this sect, apostates could never receive absolution from their sin, even though, by a life of continued penance, they might render themselves worthy of the Divine mercy. They denied the validity of baptism outside their own sect, and all Christians whom they succeeded in winning over to their side they forced to be re-baptised. They excluded from their community not only all those who had been guilty of the crime of apostasy, but all who were guilty of mortal sin. They declared second marriages to be unlawful. Styling themselves *Cathari* or Pure, a name adopted later by the Manicheans of France, they professed more or less the rigorous morality of the Montanists. The sect spread considerably, but disappeared altogether in the sixth century.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCERNING THE MILLENNIUM—THE OBSERVANCE
OF EASTER—THE RE-BAPTISING OF HERETICAL
CONVERTS

THE Millennium doctrine, or Chiliasm,* had its origin in the prejudices of the Jewish Christians in regard to the Messianic Kingdom. Founding their views on the promised Millennium of the Apocalypse (xx. 2-6), which they interpreted as a literal personal reign of Christ with His saints upon earth for 1,000 years before the final resurrection and the last judgement, they clung to the vain hope of the final rule of their nation, under a royal Messias, over all the other nations of the world. Their doctrine, when fully developed, was as follows :

After the world has lasted for 6,000 years, Antichrist will come and reign three and a half years, when Christ will appear and conquer His adversary. Then shall begin the Millennial kingdom of which Jerusalem shall be the capital, or Pepuza according to the Montanists ; and Christ, with the just, will rule over the earth, which will then become as a second Paradise. During all this time Satan shall be bound in chains, but at the end of a thousand years he shall be set free, when, with his bands of wicked spirits, he will lay siege to the Holy City. The wrath of God shall be enkindled against him, and He will overthrow him and cast him down to the bottomless pit, and then shall come the second resurrection and the last judgement.

The doctrine soon became extensively spread, and even found favour with some of the early Fathers. The Gnostic Cerinthus and other heretics taught that the Millennium would consist in a reign of sensual pleasures ; but other writers looked upon it as a period of spiritual delights, and regarded it as a preparation for that further state of happiness, the joy of the beatific vision which was to be the lot of the just for all eternity.

The Chiliastic theory met with the greatest opposition from the Roman and Alexandrian divines. A schism would in all probability have arisen had it not been for the wise and amiable Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, probably the greatest opponent of the up-holders of the Millennial teaching, who succeeded (255) in inducing the leaders of the system to renounce their erroneous views. The doctrine of the Millennium was opposed by Origen and most of the orthodox writers of the fourth century. In time, disproved and vanquished by the Fathers, the Chiliastic error gradually disappeared when the persecutions came to an end and peace was restored to the Church.

THE OBSERVANCE OF EASTER.—To establish a uniformity in observing the time of the Pasch throughout the Church had long

* Chiliasm, Millennium, period of 1,000 years.

been the wish and the endeavour of the Bishops of Rome, as a difference in the time for celebrating the Feast had existed from the beginning between the Western Churches and those of Asia Minor.

The Christians of Asia Minor, conforming to Jewish reckoning, celebrated the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord on the 14th and 16th of Nisan respectively, regardless of the days of the week on which these dates might fall. Nisan was the first month of the sacred year of the Jews, and began about the vernal equinox ; and as their months were lunar months, the 14th of Nisan would fall at, or nearly at, the first full moon after the equinox. Now our Lord had risen from the dead on a Sunday ; and in memory of so great a mystery the Church honoured the day in a special manner by substituting it as the day of rest instead of the Sabbath (Saturday), and celebrating the feast of the Resurrection on no other day than on a Sunday.

The Churches of Asia Minor assigned as the motive for their practice the example of our Lord, and the tradition which had come down through St Polycarp from St John the Evangelist. The Western Churches alleged the authority of SS Peter and Paul for their custom of commemorating Christ's Death on the Friday and the Resurrection on the Sunday following the 14th of Nisan. This practice, too, prevailed in Greece, Palestine, and Egypt.

About the year 160, St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, went to Rome to confer with Pope St Anicetus (157-168) on this and other matters. Anicetus tried to induce Polycarp to conform to the more general usage, but the venerable Bishop could not be prevailed upon to abandon a practice which he had found established in the Church, and which he himself had observed in common with St John the Apostle.

When Pope St Victor succeeded St Eleutherius in the See of Peter (192-201), he applied himself with greater determination than any of his predecessors to bring about uniformity of practice. But before coming to a final decision, he despatched letters to the bishops of Asia Minor, requiring them to hold synods for the purpose of thoroughly discussing the question, and to give him their opinion. After several councils had been held, it was the unanimous decree, with the exception of Ephesus, that the feast of Easter should henceforth be observed on a Sunday.

Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, together with his suffragan bishops, could not be induced to depart from the ancient custom of his Church. Victor was bent on having recourse to severe measures against the refractory prelates, but was prevailed upon by St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, acting in the name of the bishops of Gaul generally, not to proceed to extremes lest a schism might be caused in the Church. Victor thereupon desisted from taking further steps in the matter, and Ephesus and the Churches in conjunction with it were left to pursue their former practice, till the question was finally settled in the general Council of Nice (325), which prescribed the Roman rule, and thus established a uniform observance of Easter.

throughout the Church. Those who refused to conform to the general practice were henceforth branded as "Quartodecimans."

THE RE-BAPTISING OF HERETICAL CONVERTS.—We come now to the controversy regarding baptism administered by heretics. Since many of the Novatians, and others who had cut themselves off from the Catholic Church, after a time sought readmittance into her fold, the question arose, whether or not they were to be re-baptised after having received baptism at the hands of a heretic or a schismatic.

In the beginning, the baptism given by heretics had been universally regarded as valid and sufficient; nor was baptism readministered except when it had not been conferred according to prescribed essential forms—for example, the Antitrinitarians and some of the Gnostics did not baptise in the name of the Trinity. And although many of these heretics, drawing closer and closer to the Church, began to baptise validly, yet, from custom, they were none the less as a rule required to be re-baptised.

A council of bishops assembled at Carthage, and presided over by Agrippinus, Bishop of that city (218–222), pronounced as null and void all baptism conferred by heretics, a judgement to which, from that time, a number of African bishops conformed. In the third century, re-baptism was also the practice in part of Asia Minor, where, as at Carthage, and for the same reasons, it was regarded as essential by two Councils held to consider the question. Outside Africa and Asia Minor, and especially at Rome, the constant and universal usage was opposed to re-baptism.

Pope St Stephen (253–257) tried to put a stop to the abusive practice, and to this end wrote to Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea, and Helenus, Bishop of Tarsus, threatening them with excommunication in case they refused to comply. It is doubtful whether they submitted or not, but it is generally believed that Helenus and all the African bishops, except Firmilian, bowed to the decree of the Pope.

Two years afterwards the quarrel broke out afresh. Eighteen Numidian bishops asked St Cyprian what line of conduct they ought to follow in regard to some recently converted Novatians. Cyprian, as Primate of Africa, assembled in Council thirty-one bishops at Carthage in 255, and in the following year presided over another Council of seventy-one bishops. The conclusion come to at both of these Councils was that the baptism conferred by heretics or schismatics was invalid; and the decision was sent to Rome.

Stephen gave a cold reception to the African deputies; it is even said that he refused to admit them into his presence, and that he wrote to St Cyprian that the custom, not to re-baptise, must be observed: "*Nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est, ut manus illi imponatur in poenitentiam,*" that is, no change was to be made contrary to what had been handed down, and the newly converted were to be received only by the imposition of hands unto penance—an ancient ceremony made use of in reconciling certain classes of

sinners who had fallen away from the Church. A threat of excommunication, too, is said to have accompanied the reply.

Far from submitting, Cyprian broke out into recriminations against the Pope, without, however, challenging his primacy; and, in 256, convoked at Carthage a third Council, all the members of which—to the number of eighty-seven bishops—confirmed the decrees of the two preceding Councils. However, before the threat of excommunication could be carried out, the controversy was brought to an abrupt close by the outbreak of the Valerian persecution, during which both Stephen and Cyprian received the crown of martyrdom. The fact that St Cyprian's name appears in the Canon of the Mass next to that of Pope St Cornelius would seem to point to Cyprian's timely retraction.

Some have imagined that in this controversy is to be found an argument against the primacy of the Pope. Yet what took place except an attempt to settle the question of re-baptism? Two Metropolitan bishops, Cyprian of Carthage, and Firmilian of Caesarea, held out for a practice handed down by the tradition of their respective Churches, and their opposition to the Holy See is but inspired by a sincere devotion to the Church and zeal for the salvation of souls; and neither Cyprian nor Firmilian nor the other bishops think of calling in question the Pope's right of jurisdiction over the Churches. They are exasperated, they break out into words of bitter censure, but the idea of denying this authority never occurs to them. According to these critics Stephen is too exacting in the present case, yet not a word escapes from them against the principle of his right to interfere in what concerns the universal Church. In spite of the wound inflicted on them by his threat of excommunication, they do not think of breaking off communion with him. We must therefore conclude that they recognise that they are in presence of an authority superior to their own.

CHAPTER XXII

THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

ST BARNABAS—ST CLEMENT OF ROME—ST IGNATIUS—AUTHOR OF "EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS"—AUTHORS OF THE "DIDACHE"—HERMAS—ST POLYCARP—ST PAPIAS

By the name "Fathers" we understand the early ecclesiastical writers, except those who wrote the Sacred Scriptures, extending down to, or even beyond, the sixth century; while under the name of "Apostolic Fathers" we include those of them who, coming from the Apostolic age, lived with the Apostles and were their immediate disciples.

Their writings, although not extensive, are of the utmost value to us, since they are the works of those who associated with the Apostles themselves, or received their doctrine immediately from

them. For that reason they afford us the most valuable testimony of what was the real teaching of the Apostles their masters. Their works originally appeared in Greek. Polycarp and his friend Papias, who, we are told, was a hearer of St John, represent the Churches of Asia ; and as Polycarp, too, was a disciple of St John, and the master of St Irenaeus, he thus forms the binding link between the Church of the first century and that of the end of the second.

(1) ST BARNABAS.—He was the fellow-worker of St Paul and the one who accompanied him in his first missionary journey, and is supposed by ancient writers to have been the author of an extant Epistle attributed to his pen ; although a contrary opinion has been held in modern times. Whoever the author of the Epistle may be, he has clearly two objects in view, to win over the Jews to Christianity, and to induce the Jewish Christians to forego the Mosaic practices.

(2) ST CLEMENT OF ROME.—St Clement, the disciple and third successor of St Peter as Bishop of Rome (91–100), is credited with *Two Epistles to the Corinthians*. The authenticity of the First Epistle is generally acknowledged, but the Second is considered more than doubtful, as also are the *Two Letters "To Virgins"* and many other writings hitherto ascribed to him.

His *First Epistle* was a vigorous letter addressed to the Church at Corinth, where, to the great scandal of the Gentiles, many of the laity had openly refused obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors, and many of the clergy had been violently expelled from their churches. Clement exhorts the Corinthians to put an end to the scandal and pay to their priests the honour and respect which is their due ; he warns them, too, against envy ; he points out to them the necessity of the hierarchy and of submission to authority, and concludes with an earnest exhortation to mutual charity. This Epistle was held in high esteem, and, according to ancient custom, continued to be read on Sundays to the assembled faithful not only in Corinth, but in many other Churches.

It is doubtful whether the Corinthians asked the Pope to intervene in their trouble ; but be that as it may, this Epistle supplies a strong argument in favour of the Primacy of the Roman Church. This becomes especially clear if the Corinthians had recourse to a Church so far away as Rome, rather than to St John the Apostle, who must have been living at the time, or to any other of the flourishing Churches in their own country. Nor does the argument lose in force if Clement took it upon himself to address the Epistle to them, since, throughout the letter, he speaks as a master and judge to those who owe him deference and obedience, and assumes to himself an authority beyond the ordinary authority claimed by other bishops.

(3) ST IGNATIUS, martyr, the disciple of St John the Evangelist and Bishop of Antioch, was, as we have already seen, condemned as a Christian under Trajan to be devoured by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatre (107). The *Seven Letters* which he wrote on his way to martyrdom, five of them to the various Churches in

Asia Minor, one to St Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna, and one to the Christians at Rome, are universally regarded as authentic.

His letter to the Romans opens with a eulogy of the Roman Church, which he greets under the distinguished title of "*Universo coetui charitatis praesidens*," head of the whole assembly of Charity (the Church). His letter to Polycarp contains a summary of the chief duties of a bishop. The other five letters include exhortations in favour of ecclesiastical unity, and of guarding against the heresies of his day. In particular he denounces the *Docetae*, who denied that Christ had a real body, and consequently refrained from receiving the Holy Eucharist since they did not believe that it contained the Body and Blood of our Lord. Ignatius bears invaluable testimony to the complete development of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of the Primacy of the See of Rome.

(4) THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS, a valuable literary monument of these times, belongs, according to most critics, to the second century. Its author is an unknown Christian versed in Greek learning; while the person to whom it is written seems to have been a pagan of high position asking for instruction in the doctrines of Christianity. The knowledge sought for is supplied by the anonymous author. He draws attention to the rejection of Judaism, depicts in glowing colours the manner of living of the Christians, proves the Divine origin of Christianity, refutes objections to Christianity owing to its late arrival in the world, and concludes by exhorting Diognetus to become a Christian.

(5) THE DIDACHÈ, or doctrine of the Twelve Apostles, a work held in high esteem by the ancient Church, was afterwards lost, but fortunately found again in 1873, in a monastery at Constantinople, by Mgr Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia, and published by him in 1883. It belongs to the end of the first or to the early part of the second century.

The Didachè is divided into three parts: the first part treats of *the two ways*, the way of life and the way of death, and is an outline of the principal doctrines of Christian morality; the second deals with baptism, fasting—which it recommends to be observed on the Wednesday and Friday of every week—prayer and the Holy Eucharist; the third touches on the discipline and composition of the Church—Apostles, prophets, doctors, bishops and deacons, the sanctification of the Sunday, ordinations, etc. The Didachè supplies us with much valuable information in regard to the development of the Church's doctrine at this remote period.

(6) HERMAS, the author of the *Pastor*, is generally held to have been a brother of Pope Pius I (142–157), and to have written in Rome about the middle of the second century. The work was regarded by many in the second and third century as divinely inspired.

The writing contains *Visions*, four in number, in which the Church appears to Hermas in the guise of an aged matron, and is represented as disfigured by sin. Next the Church takes the form of a

tower which angels are in the act of building. Some of the stones brought for its construction are exactly suited for their required position: these are meant to represent the souls of such as have kept themselves in the grace of God. Other stones, figured in the third vision, are incapable of being adjusted, and are consequently rejected: yet those—souls that have lost their baptismal innocence—may yet serve in the construction of the tower after being chiselled and clear-cut under the blows of the mallet of penance. Lastly Hermas sees a lovely maiden decked as a bride: this is the Church in all her beauty, glory, and perfection, as she will appear at the last day. Then come the *Precepts*, or twelve commandments, given to Hermas by an angel in the form of a shepherd (*Pastor*); and lastly the *Similitudes*, in which the angel continued to instruct Hermas especially on the value of prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, and detachment from the things of this world.

(7) ST POLYCARP was not only the disciple of St John, by whom he was appointed Bishop of Smyrna, but, in the words of St Irenaeus, he had been trained by the Apostles, and had conversed with many who had seen Christ. Towards the end of his life we find him at Rome, conferring with Pope Anicetus concerning the day on which the Feast of the Pasch ought to be celebrated. Before leaving the Eternal City he is said to have converted many of the Gnostic heretics. One day he was met in the city by the heresiarch Marcion, who asked him, "Knowest thou me?" "Yes," replied Polycarp, "I know thee, the first-born of Satan." Shortly after his return to Smyrna he received the crown of martyrdom (156), and with him passed away the last of the Apostolic Fathers.

The one extant work of Polycarp is his *Epistle to the Philippians*, which he wrote in answer to a letter requesting him to send them any letters of St Ignatius he might have in his possession. He not only complied with their request, but took advantage of the occasion to write to them, praising their steadfast faith and the love they had shown to Ignatius and his fellow-prisoners. At the same time he gave valuable directions in regard to their conduct, and warned them against the Gnostic heresies.

(8) ST PAPIAS, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, and a contemporary and friend of St Polycarp, and probably, too, a "hearer of St John," wrote in five books the "*Explanations of our Lord's Discourses*." This work, though extant in the thirteenth century, is now lost, with the exception of a few fragments preserved by St Irenaeus and Eusebius. These extracts show the great importance he attached to oral tradition, to obtain which he visited the Churches and consulted the Elders that he might gather from them the tradition of the Church relative to the life and discourses of our Lord. They contain, moreover, the first mention of the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS AND OTHER WRITERS OF
THE SECOND CENTURY

ST JUSTIN MARTYR—TATIAN—ATHENAGORAS—ST THEOPHILUS—
ST MELITO—MINUCIUS FELIX—ST IRENAEUS

THE constant demand for the destruction of the Christians, as well as the persecutions to which they were exposed and the attacks made upon their religion, called forth the earliest of those *Apologies* addressed by Christian writers to the Emperors with the object of explaining and vindicating the truths of the Christian faith. Their aim, too, was to disabuse the heathens of their own false notions, and to induce them, if possible, to put an end to those senseless and cruel persecutions against the Christians, seeing that the most heartless tortures inflicted upon them served but to increase their number and perfect their sanctity.

During the second and third centuries a succession of *Apologists*, as they are called, took up the pen and boldly exposed the emptiness and depravity of the heathen worship, and at the same time laid before the public the sublime moral principles of Christian practice and belief. Although the earliest of these writers were contemporary with the Apostolic Fathers, they themselves are not given that title, as they were not actual disciples of the Apostles ; but their works had great weight, since the writers were men of culture and learning who had been brought up in paganism, and were all acquainted with the heathen systems of philosophy.

(1) ST JUSTIN, to whose martyrdom and writings reference has already been made, was among the earliest of these writers, and is regarded as the principal *Apologist* of the second century. Nothing has contributed more to his lasting fame than his two extant *Apologies* written in favour of the Christian religion. These and his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho* are the only relics of Justin's numerous writings that have been preserved to us. In them he appears as a witness of Catholic Tradition : he affirms the doctrine of the Real Presence, cites from the four Gospels, mentions the *Apocalypse* written by " John, one of the Apostles of Christ," recognises the inspiration of the Old Testament and takes for granted that of the New. How vivid is the glimpse he gives us of the Church's doctrine !

(2) TATIAN, an Assyrian by birth, was converted from paganism by studying the Sacred Writings and observing the edifying lives of the Christians. Of his many writings only one has come down to us, his *Discourse to the Greeks*, a work in which he not only justifies his conversion and vindicates Christianity, but exposes the immoralities and absurdities of Greek mythology. A more celebrated work of Tatian was his *Diatessaron*, a sort of concordance of the four Gospels, but this has not come down to us in its original form. Tatian later went over to the Gnostics and became the leader of the ascetic

sect, the *Encratites*, a term meaning "abstemious," from the strictness and severity of their principles and mode of living.

(3) ATHENAGORAS, a Christian philosopher of Athens, has left us an *Apology* which he addressed (c. 177) to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and a treatise on the "Resurrection of the Dead." In his *Apology* the author refutes in a calm and dignified tone the charges of atheism, incest, and the eating of human flesh, so persistently, yet so foolishly, levelled against the Christians by the pagans.

(4) ST THEOPHILUS, a convert from paganism, died Bishop of Antioch in 181. In three books he has given us a defence of Christianity, which he addressed to a heathen friend with the intention of winning him over to the faith. He treats of the mystery of one God in three Persons, and applies, probably for the first time, the Greek word *Trias* ($\tauριας$) to the Blessed Trinity. The doctrine of the creation of the world out of nothing he proves from the Scriptures, and from the argument that matter, being subject to change, cannot have existed from all eternity. He argues, too, for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

(5) ST MELITO, Bishop of Sardis in Lydia, who suffered martyrdom about the same time as St Polycarp, was one of the most prolific writers of his century, but only a few fragments of his eighteen works have come down to us. He addressed an *Apology* to Marcus Aurelius; and we have a fragment from him of a catalogue of the canonical books of the Old Testament, which forms an important link in the history of the Sacred Writings. St Jerome reckons St Melito among the ecclesiastical writers of renown.

(6) MINUCIUS FELIX, of African origin, practised as a jurist at Rome even after his conversion to Christianity, probably in the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180). In mature life he embraced Christianity from conviction. His *Octavius* is regarded as one of the most valuable contributions to Apologetic literature. It takes the form of a dialogue between two friends Caecilius and Octavius, both jurists, while its object is to demonstrate the existence of God and to defend the Christians from the calumnies constantly brought against them by the pagans. Caecilius, the defender of paganism, attacks the unity of God, attempts to show that there is no such thing as Providence, and levels the stock arguments and accusations of the heathens against the new religion. Octavius replies, and pleads the cause of Christianity. He brings out the existence of God from the order which reigns in the universe, and draws an admirable picture of the lives of the Christians. After much pointed raillery on both sides, the dialogue ends in Caecilius embracing the new faith, convinced as he is by the arguments of his Christian friend.

(7) ST IRENAEUS was born in Asia Minor (c. 140), and in his youth became a disciple of St Polycarp and St Papias. Speaking of St Polycarp, he says: "What I heard from him, that I wrote, not on paper, but in my heart; and by the grace of God I constantly bring it fresh to my mind." His connection with St Polycarp, who was a

disciple of St John the Evangelist, both joins him to the Apostolic Fathers and links him to the age and teaching of the Apostles. He is regarded as one of the most eminent of the early Fathers. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180) we see him as a priest at Lyons. He was sent by the Church there with a letter to Pope St Eleutherius in reference to the Montanist heresy. On his return he was chosen to succeed the martyred Pothinus as Bishop of Lyons, and after a glorious episcopate of some twenty-five years, he himself received the crown of martyrdom about the year 202; but the circumstances of his death have not come down to us.

His great work, against Gnosticism, though originally written in Greek in five books, is commonly quoted under the Latin title "*Adversus Haereses*"; and the very ancient and literal Latin version of it has come down to us almost entire. It is a work of the highest importance for showing the history of Catholic doctrine, since in it we find discussed almost the whole range of Catholic dogma. It treats of Tradition, the Infallibility of the Church, the Primacy of the Roman See, the Unity of God, the Incarnation of the Word, the two natures in the one Person of Jesus Christ, the Real Presence, Transubstantiation, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Resurrection of the Body, Grace, Free Will, Confession; thus giving us in a simple, clear, concise form, the uniform teaching of the Catholic Church, and tracing it, as we see, through St Polycarp to the Apostle St John.

With the exception of the writings of Minucius Felix, those of the authors named hitherto originally appeared in Greek, but from this point a division will be made between the Greek Fathers and the Latin Fathers of the Western Church.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

THE first Christian schools go back to the very beginning of Christianity, since it was the first care of its teachers to instruct the new converts in the principles and practice of their religion. As the faith began to spread and the Churches became organised, such instruction, which included the reading and explanation of the Scriptures, was entrusted by the bishops to teachers called *Catechists*, who were for the most part presbyters or deacons. Those under instruction were spoken of as *Catechumens*.

When philosophers and learned men began to enter the Church, they naturally became the heads of the catechetical schools and their instruction took a wider range. But it is with the third century that ecclesiastical science may be truly said to begin. Its teachers made use of philosophy and the other sciences for the purpose of defining and explaining theology; but while they generally adopted the language of the Neo-Platonists, the foundation of their doctrine was drawn from Scriptural and Traditional sources. And, although

we find Christian schools in various places during the second century it was not till the beginning of the third century that their teaching attained those remarkable proportions which we find developed especially in the great centres of *Rome*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*.

THE SCHOOL OF ROME, founded about 150 by St Justin Martyr, was intended not only for the instruction of catechumens, but to oppose the heresies of the day, particularly Gnosticism. Though it never attained the celebrity of the other two schools, it was first both in the order of time and by reason of its orthodoxy.

THE SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA, merely as a catechetical school, is said to go back to St Mark the Evangelist, the first bishop of that city ; but after its development on the broader basis, St Pantaenus, who became head of the school about 180 and died in 212, is its first master of whom we possess any certain knowledge. His teaching was chiefly oral.

THE SCHOOL OF ANTIOCH would seem to have gone beyond the limits of merely catechetical instruction by the second half of the third century, when we find at its head the priest and martyr St Lucian. Although Lucian fell into the heresy of Paul of Samosata and was excommunicated, he was later readmitted to the unity of the Church, and was beheaded for the faith in 311.

The *language of the Church* was at first Greek ; and in their reading of the Old Testament the early Christians generally used the Greek Septuagint version. In the West, as well in Africa as in Gaul, and even at Rome, scholars were in the habit of writing in Greek even in the middle of the third century. The Greek language and Greek culture had spread over the length and breadth of the Roman Empire ; and, owing to the almost universal usage of the Greek text of the Old and the New Testaments, its spread was favourable to Christianity.

Latin versions of the Scriptures are also known to have existed in the early days of Christianity. It was from the Septuagint translation that the early Latin translations were made, among them being the famous *Versio Italica* or Italic version. This was the Ancient Vulgate version, which dated probably from the middle or the latter part of the second century, and remained in general use in the Latin Churches down to the sixth century, when it was superseded by the New Vulgate of St Jerome. Christian Latin Literature flourished especially in North Africa, and soon there arose there two writers of great fame who employed that tongue, Tertullian and St Cyprian.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LATIN FATHERS OF THE THIRD CENTURY

TERTULLIAN—ST CYPRIAN—ARNOBIS—LACTANTIIUS

(1) **TERTULLIAN**, the father of Latin theology, was born at Carthage of pagan parents about the year 160. A man of great intellect and talent, he seems to have followed, either at Carthage or at Rome, the profession of an advocate. When he was about thirty-five

years old, he was converted to Christianity and became one of its most powerful defenders. Whether he married before or after his conversion is not known ; but about the year 196 he separated from his wife and was ordained priest at Carthage. He continued to be a zealous champion of the Church against all forms of heresy and schism till, in 202, attracted by the austerity and exaggerated strictness of the Montanists, he joined their sect and strenuously defended their views as alone truly *spiritual* ; and yet he protested his unswerving attachment to the Church. According to him the Catholics, though imperfect, were orthodox ; whereas the Montanists, who possessed the Spirit in all fulness, were saints in very truth, *pneumatics* or *spirituals*. Later, even the austerities of the Montanists did not satisfy his ardent nature, and he became the founder of what were termed the Tertullianists, a stricter sect of Montanists, the last remnants of which St Augustine was destined to bring back to the Church. Tertullian laboured as a Montanist at Carthage till 220(?), when he died, probably without returning to the fold of the Church.

The writings of Tertullian were very numerous ; and although many have come down to us, many more have been lost, especially of his earlier works, all of which were written in Greek. What we do possess of the latter are extant only in Latin versions. All his works are useful to us for the light they throw on most varied points of doctrine and on every department of the life of the early Christians. For convenience' sake they may be divided into *Apologetical*, *Polemical*, and *Ethical* works ; and even those which he wrote after his lapse into Montanism are valuable for the insight they give us of the early faith and its practice.

In his *Apologeticus* he defends the Christians against their heathen opponents, and demands for them the same freedom of religious worship and the same rights as are accorded to the rest of the Emperor's subjects. He clears the Christians from the calumnies heaped upon them by their adversaries, and shows how unjust it is to punish them merely for the name they bear. They are condemned, he complains, to the most frightful torments even without being allowed to speak in their own defence, a privilege granted to the worst of criminals. He sets forth the submission of the Christians to their rulers, the love they bore even to their persecutors, their charity one for another, their horror of vice, and their constancy, which shrank not from tortures or death. The laws against them, he averred, were unjust, and ought to be abolished : they were not guilty of treason ; they prayed for the Emperor ; and even though they were able, were they so disposed, to take up arms in self-defence, as their strength and numbers warranted, yet they preferred death to rebellion. Let their persecutors, then, abandon all hope of destroying them by depriving them of life, for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity, / "Semen est sanguis christianorum." His *POLEMICAL* writings, "De Praescriptionibus Haereticorum," "Adversus Marcionem," "Adversus Praxeam," etc., are directed

against all heretics, but especially against the Gnostics. Because man is free and weak, writes Tertullian, heresies will ever exist. Where, then, must we look for the doctrine which Jesus Christ came on earth to teach? This same doctrine He gave to His Apostles, and they in turn to the Churches founded by them, that is, to the Churches of Corinth, of the Philippians, of Ephesus, of Rome; and it is there that we must seek it.

But, it may be objected, the Apostles did not know *all* the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Yet, on the day of Pentecost, did not the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the distinct promise of our Lord, teach them "*all truth*"? Nor can it be said that the Apostles were in possession of a secret doctrine which they made known only to a select few of their disciples. They were commanded to go into the whole world, and to teach all things whatsoever He had taught them. Nor would it be more reasonable to assert that the Churches had not understood the Apostles, since all had drawn the selfsame meaning from their teaching, and this very agreement could not have come about had not all gathered from them the selfsame truth.

But who were they, the heretics? Whence did they come? They were but of yesterday. They had only just been born. The day before yesterday nobody knew them. No link joined them to the Apostles. Their ancestors, if they had any, were the very heretics condemned by the Apostles; whereas the members of the one true Church were descended from the old possessors, and proved their descent by authentic titles, viz., by the uninterrupted succession of their bishops from the Apostles, and the uniformity of their doctrine with that of the Apostles.

His *Ethical* works bring out, by vivid contrast, the great difference that existed between the morality of the Christians and the vices and depravity of the pagan world around them.

Tertullian was learned, rich in ideas, endowed with the most brilliant talent, eloquent, forcible, and original; and to him we owe many terms that have come down to our own day, and which, in a theological sense, were used by him for the first time; such as Unity, Trinity, Substance, Accident, Divine Procession, Free Will, Sacrament, Confession, Satisfaction, and many others.

(2) ST CYPRIAN, born at Carthage in the very early part of the third century, belonged to a wealthy senatorial family. About 242 he was converted to Christianity and was ordained priest in 247, and, a year afterwards, was consecrated Bishop of his native city. We have already referred to the work of his episcopate, and seen how, during the persecution of Decius, he concealed himself that he might the better be able to serve his flock, with whom he maintained a constant correspondence from his place of concealment. The ten years of his episcopate were brought to a close by his martyrdom under Valerian in 258. Such was his admiration for the writings of Tertullian that he always spoke of him as his "master"; "*Da magistrum*" (give me my master), being the expression he constantly made use of when calling for his favourite.

His chief work, “*De unitate Ecclesiae*,” was written when the schisms of Novatus and Novatian were at their height. The episcopate, he writes, was instituted by Jesus Christ, and is the foundation of the Church, and the source of all spiritual authority. Although the bishops are many, the Church is one because the episcopate is one ; yet he speaks of the superiority of the Bishop of Rome as the successor of St Peter, on whom Christ founded His Church, and to whom He gave the commission, “Feed My sheep.” The Church of Rome he styles “the chair of St Peter, the chief Church whence the unity of the priesthood has its source ; the root and mother of the Catholic Church.” The Church has ever remained one, in unbroken episcopal succession, as there is only one sun, though his rays are everywhere diffused. A branch broken from the tree can bear no fruit, just as a brook cut off from its source dries up. Out of the Church, thus organised and centralised at Rome, there can be no Christianity : “*Christianus non est, qui in Christi Ecclesia non est.*” Whosoever cuts himself off from the Church is a foreigner, a profane person, an enemy ; and no one can have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. As well might one out of the Ark have hoped to escape the Deluge, as one out of the Church hope to be saved : “*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus.*”

His letters, too, eighty-one in number, give us a great insight into his times, and afford much valuable information touching the practice and usages of the early Church.

(3) ARNOBIUS was a distinguished rhetorician of Sicca in Africa, and flourished at the end of the third and at the beginning of the fourth century. Through witnessing the courage of the martyrs, and seeing the injustice of their persecution, he was converted to Christianity ; and, in proof of the sincerity of his conversion, published, in seven books, his “*Disputations against the Gentiles*,” in which he shows the fallacy of paganism and the immorality of idolatry, and demonstrates the truth of the Christian religion.

(4) LACTANTIUS, born of heathen parents, probably in Africa, was a pupil of Arnobius, and attained to higher fame than his master. From the elegance and purity of his style he won the title of the Christian Cicero, and was called by St Jerome the most learned man of his time. In 312 he was summoned to Gaul by Constantine to become the tutor of his eldest son Crispus, and died at Treves at an advanced age.

His fame as a writer rests on his apologetic work, “*Institutiones Divinae*,” in seven books, a work which he dedicated to Constantine. It is an attack on paganism and a defence of Christianity. The “*De mortibus Persecutorum*,” doubtfully assigned to him, is the first book of Ecclesiastical History written in Latin. It traces the persecutions from Nero to Diocletian and his colleagues, and shows, in the shameful and cruel death of the persecutors, a chastisement inflicted on them by the God of the Christians.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREEK FATHERS OF THE THIRD CENTURY

ST HIPPOLYTUS—CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA—ORIGEN

(1) ST HIPPOLYTUS, one of the most learned and most remarkable scholars of his time, was a disciple of St Irenaeus and a friend of Origen, and, although born in the East, resided in Rome and was a priest, probably a bishop, of the Roman Church. Having become the leader of a schismatical sect, he took up a position of strong antagonism against Pope St Callistus (217–222), and in opposition to him and his successors figured as antipope for many years. During the persecution under Maximin, he was sent into exile along with Pope St Pontian to the unhealthy island of Sardinia, about 235, and eventually ended his life by martyrdom after being reconciled with the Church. A marble statue raised to him during his lifetime, and dug up in Rome in 1551, represents him as Bishop of Portus, and is inscribed with a list of his works.

An important work, *Philosophumena* or Refutation of all Heresies, originally in ten books, is ascribed to him, and affords valuable testimony to the genuineness of St John's Gospel, besides throwing much light on other important questions relating to the history of the early Church. The second and third books are missing; the last seven were discovered in the Greek convent of Mount Athos in 1842.

(2) CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA was born at Athens, probably of heathen parents. In search of knowledge he journeyed through Italy, Greece, and Egypt, stopping at the various schools to hear the most eminent Christian teachers, and at Alexandria he became a disciple of Pantaenus, through whose influence he embraced Christianity. There, too, he was ordained priest, and, about the year 190, undertook the direction of the Catechetical School in succession to his master. When the persecution broke out under Septimus Severus, he withdrew, from motives of prudence, first into Cappadocia, then to Antioch, afterwards to Jerusalem, and finally, it is believed, returned to Alexandria. He died about 217, shortly before the death of Tertullian.

Of Clement's works four have come down to us complete, his “*Exhortation to the Greeks*,” in which, like the earlier Apologists, he shows the falsity of paganism and the necessity of receiving the Gospel; “*The Educator*” (*Paedagogus*), a treatise on the moral law of Christianity contrasted with heathen practices; “*Stromata*,” a kind of miscellany containing considerations upon almost every point of Christian teaching, by which he would lead the reader to a knowledge of the truths of faith and to the practice of evangelical perfection; and a discourse entitled “*Quis Dives Salvetur?*” (Who is the rich man that is saved?), the only one of his smaller works that has come down to us.

Clement's learning was so wide, so vast, and so varied, that the theologian, the philosopher, the historian, the archaeologist, each in his own province, may find in him ample scope for information or reference; yet his works are not altogether free from error. So great was his esteem for philosophy that he even regarded it as a necessary preparation for Christian theology, and styled it its handmaid, *ancilla theologiae*. Though ancient writers often apply to him the title Saint, his name no longer appears in the Roman martyrology, chiefly from the fact, no doubt, that his orthodoxy on several points leaves something to be desired.

(3) ORIGEN (185-254), the greatest glory of the School of Alexandria, was born in that same city, in the bosom of a Christian family, in the year 185. From his father Leonides, who himself was a man of piety and learning, he received an excellent education. Under the famous Neo-Platonist, Ammonius Saccas, he applied himself to the study of Greek literature and philosophy, and in his theological course was directed by Pantaenus and Clement. He became the most illustrious of Clement's pupils, and when barely eighteen years of age was appointed by Bishop Demetrius to take charge of the *Catechetical School* which, after the flight of Clement from Alexandria in 202, had been left without a teacher.

He led a very austere life; and, in spite of the hours taken up in teaching and study, spent much of the night in meditation and prayer. During the persecution under Septimus Severus, he accompanied several of his disciples before their pagan judges; and when his own father was cast into prison as a Christian, he was prevented from joining him there only by the action of his mother, who concealed his clothes, and remained deaf to all entreaties to produce them. He had to content himself with writing to his father a consoling and touching letter, in which he encouraged him to persevere, and not to allow himself to be shaken in his resolve by the thought of the dear ones he was leaving behind. Leonides received the crown of martyrdom, and his goods were seized. This for a time plunged his family into misery and want, but Origen was not slow in coming to their help, and for a while supported them on the fruits of his teaching.

In 212, Origen went to Rome, but soon left the Eternal City and returned to Alexandria at the request of his bishop. He continued to teach there till 228, when he was sent into Greece to oppose certain heresies that had arisen there. On his way he had to pass through Palestine, and, as he was but yet a layman, he was ordained priest at Caesarea by Theoctistus, Bishop of that city, and Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, both of whom were his friends and had been his fellow-students. Demetrius, regarding Origen's ordination as irregular for several reasons, and indignant moreover that his own episcopal rights had been set aside in the matter, seeing that his consent as ordinary had not been sought, convened two Councils (231), which excommunicated Origen, deprived him of his priestly powers, and deposed him from his position as head of the Catechetical School. The illustrious scholar then left Egypt and withdrew to

Caesarea in Palestine, where he founded a famous theological school, which became the centre of a learned circle, and ranked among its scholars the great St Gregory Thaumaturgus. The Churches of Palestine and Asia Minor disregarded altogether the sentence passed on Origen by the Church of Alexandria, and allowed him to preach the Gospel to the people ; and at a synod held at Bosra, in Arabia, he succeeded in convincing Beryllus, Bishop of that city, of the fallacy of his doctrine concerning the Blessed Trinity, and caused him to retract. Origen was still at Caesarea when the Decian persecution broke out. Prison and torture suffered for the faith hastened his end, and he died at Tyre in the seventieth year of his age. Surnamed the “ Adamantine ” on account of his unwearied diligence, he composed as many as 6,000 volumes, according to St Epiphanius ; but according to St Jerome only 2,000.

But few of the many and varied writings of Origen have come down to us, and of those that have reached us the most important are (1) his treatise “ *Contra Celsum*,” probably the most learned of his works. It was written as a reply to a work published by the Neo-Platonist Celsus, and was regarded by the pagans as a complete refutation of Christianity. *Contra Celsum* is ranked as the best of the *Apologies* that appeared during the first three centuries. (2) But Origen’s greatest work was his “ *Hexapla*,” fragments only of which have come down to us. It was a critical edition of the Old Testament, and was called Hexapla (sixfold), from its giving in six different columns as many different versions in Hebrew and in Greek of the Old Testament. Its margins, too, were loaded with copious explanatory notes. The work is said to have occupied Origen twenty-eight years, and to have filled from forty to fifty volumes. Down to the year 653, it was preserved at Caesarea, when it perished in the capture of that city by the Saracens. A smaller edition of the same work, the “ *Tetrapla* ” (fourfold), contained only four separate versions of the Scriptures with marginal explanations. It was from these works, and his homilies and learned commentaries on the Scriptures, that Origen has deservedly won for himself the title of “ Father of Biblical Exegesis.” (3) The work “ *On Principles* ” has been almost entirely lost, and the inaccurate translation of it, attributed to Rufinus, contains many erroneous assertions ; but whether or not, or how far, Origen himself maintained the erroneous opinions attributed to him it is hard to say.

Most of the errors imputed to him appeared chiefly in his earlier works, but as his knowledge of Christian truths became more profound with his advancing years, he discarded many of his earlier views. We must take into account, too, that he was one of the early founders of Theological Science, and that some of the erroneous opinions advanced by him treated of points which had not as yet been defined by the Church. Doctrinal decisions of the Church and theological works were still rare.

The Catechetical School of Alexandria continued to flourish down

to the end of the fourth century. In the latter part of its existence its most famous teacher was the blind Didymus. He lost his sight when he was but four years old ; yet, in spite of the calamity that had overtaken him, he attained such fame for his learning and scientific knowledge, that he was placed in charge of the Alexandrian School. Attracted by his learning and eloquence, great numbers of students flocked to his lectures, among them being the great St Jerome, who always spoke of the blind Didymus with affection and gratitude.

CHAPTER XXVII

SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE WEST

OUR LORD'S injunction to His Apostles, " Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature " (Mark xvi. 15), seemed well on the way to be fulfilled even before the end of the first century, as we may gather from the words of St Paul only a quarter of a century after the Ascension : " I give thanks to my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all, because your faith is spoken of *in the whole world*" (Rom. i. 8). And before the end of the third century, Christians were to be found in great and ever-increasing numbers in most of the towns and cities of the known world ; and even the country districts had their Christian communities. Nor was Christianity confined to the poor and those of humble position, but it was none the less spread among the nobles and those holding official rank, a fact to be gathered from many sources, and well summed up in the words of Tertullian (160-240) : " We are but of yesterday ; and we fill your cities, islands, castles, and councils ; your army, your palaces, and your senate. We have left you only the temples."

The Apostles, with the exception of Peter and Paul and Andrew, and probably Matthias, who is said to have preached in Ethiopia, seem to have confined their labours to Asia ; it remains for us then to follow the stream of Christianity westward, flowing, as it did, from Italy as from its source.

It would appear beyond doubt that Christianity was preached in GAUL at a very early period, probably before the end of the first century. An ancient tradition affirms that Gaul owes its faith to missionaries sent by SS Peter and Paul, and to those sent by St Peter's first successors in the See of Rome. Even before the death of Domitian (81-96), Christianity, according to Lactantius, had spread into the whole world ; and if, as Eusebius tells us, it had been carried by the earliest preachers even into the Isles of Britain, is it possible that it could at the same time be unknown in Gaul ?

We may regard it as certain, then, that the faith had spread in Gaul before the end of the first century. Could it be otherwise with a country adjacent to Italy, with whose capital it had been in constant communication since the days of Caesar, well-nigh half a century before the Christian era ? Indeed, Eusebius expressly states that St Peter spread the Gospel not only in Italy, but among *the*

surrounding nations. Tertullian, as an argument against the Jews, points to the different Gallic tribes that had bowed to the law of Christ ; and St Irenaeus, who was Bishop of Lyons in succession to St Pothinus (178), appeals against the heretics of his day to “ the traditional faith of the Churches established in Germany, in Spain, and among the Celts.”

Now we learn from the *Acts of the Apostles* that, wherever the faith was first preached, it was customary to ordain ministers and place them in charge of the several Churches thus established : “ And when they had ordained to them priests in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed ” (xiv. 22). This fact alone, that the Council of Arles was attended by thirty-three Gaulish bishops in 314, is proof sufficient that the Church was fully organised in the country before the end of the third century. St Denis, or Dionysius, who became the first Bishop of Paris, is said to have been sent into Gaul with several other missionaries by St Clement, the last Pope of the first century ; but whether he is the same person as Dionysius the Areopagite, St Paul’s illustrious convert and first Bishop of Athens, is more than doubtful.

Provence, according to a very ancient tradition, owes its earliest knowledge of Christianity to Lazarus, whom our Lord raised from the dead, and who, shortly after the Ascension, set out for Southern Gaul accompanied by Maximin, one of the seventy-two Disciples, and by his sisters, Martha and Mary Magdalene. The same tradition has it that he became Bishop of Marseilles, and there ended his life by martyrdom in the reign of Domitian.

St Irenaeus, in his appeal to the traditional faith of the Churches established in GERMANY, etc., doubtless refers only to that part of Germany on the left bank of the Rhine, stretching from Strasbourg to the sea, and forming part of the Gaulish province of Belgium. What has already been said in general of the spread of Christianity in Gaul may for the same reason be applied to this province also.

It would appear beyond doubt that St Paul himself visited SPAIN soon after his first imprisonment at Rome, that is, between the years 65 and 67. In his Epistle to the Romans we find his resolve to carry the seeds of faith into that country expressed in these words : “ When I shall begin to take my journey into Spain, I hope that, as I pass, I shall see you, and be brought on my way thither by you ” (xv. 24). And St Clement expressly states that St Paul visited the “ *extremity of the West*,” by which Spain is clearly understood, since the phrase was common among the ancients to denote the “ *Pillars of Hercules*. ” Another tradition, that Spain, which included what is now Portugal, owes its faith to the preaching of St James the Greater, has little to support it. But whatever may have been the origin of the Spanish Church, one thing is certain, that by the end of the second century Christians were to be found in great numbers

in many parts of the peninsula. As many as nineteen Spanish bishops attended the Council of Elvira in the year 305.

Although it is now impossible to discover definitely by whom Christianity was first preached in BRITAIN, it is nevertheless certain that its introduction into the island took place at a very early date, probably before the end of the first century. The legend ascribing the first preaching of the Gospel in Britain to Joseph of Arimathea seems devoid of all reliable foundation ; but another, attributing it to St Peter or to St Paul, is perhaps less improbable. It is, however, certain that at a very early period, most likely before the end of the first century, there were Christians in Britain, a circumstance that might well be accounted for from the intercourse that existed, as in the case of Gaul, between the island and Italy. Of the Romans who, at that early period, came over to Britain, many must have come in contact with those who, in their own country, professed the faith, and they in turn would naturally pass on a knowledge of the Word wherever they chanced to go.

Yet, in whatever way it may have been introduced, once it got a footing, its spread seems to have been most rapid ; and soon a knowledge of the faith had penetrated to the farthest extremity of the island, even to places where the Roman power had not made itself felt, as we gather from the words of Tertullian : " *Britanniarum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita.*" Some writers conclude from these words that, before the end of the second century, even Scotland had its Christian communities.

We have it on the authority of St Bede, that Lucius, a British prince, sent messengers to Rome to Pope St Eleutherius (177-192) to have them instructed in the Christian faith ; and that they, after receiving ordination at the hands of Eleutherius, returned to their own country, where, under the influence of their patron, who himself received baptism, they gained over many converts to the faith, and organised the British Church on the model of the Churches in Gaul and Italy. By the end of the third century a regular hierarchy had unquestionably been established in the island, a fact vouched for by many writers ; and we find that, at a Council held at Arles (314), the British Church was represented by three of its bishops, namely, Eborius of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelphius of Lincoln.

Towards the end of the reign of Diocletian (301), an edict was published ordering the churches in every province to be razed to the ground, the sacred books to be burnt, and the death penalty to be passed on all Christians who refused to offer incense to the gods. The decree was ruthlessly carried out, and throughout the Empire blood flowed in torrents. British Christians, who had hitherto escaped the lot that had so often befallen their brethren on the Continent, were in their turn exposed to the full fury of the storm. Clergy and laity alike were condemned to death, while many fled to the forests and the mountains or hid in the caves, thus exposed to the danger of being devoured by wild beasts, less savage than their cruel

persecutors. It was during this persecution that St Alban, Britain's protomartyr, suffered death at Verulamium (St Albans) in the year 304.

We have already seen how the Prince of the Apostles sent from Rome his disciple St Mark the Evangelist to preach the Gospel in Egypt, and how St Mark was made the first Bishop of Alexandria, a city destined soon to become the Patriarchal See and metropolis of all Egypt and the surrounding countries.

It is not known, however, when or by whom the Gospel was first preached in what is spoken of as NORTHERN AFRICA, that vast district embracing Proconsular Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania ; but that it received its faith direct from Rome can hardly be called in question. Some writers assert that the first missionaries were sent there by St Peter himself. Be this as it may, it is beyond doubt that Christianity was established there at a very early date. At the beginning of the third century (215), we find Agrippinus, the first Bishop of Carthage whose name has come down to us, holding a Council of seventy bishops, brought together from Numidia and Proconsular Africa, and in the middle of the same century (256) we have the two Councils presided over by St Cyprian. It is reasonable to argue from the flourishing state of the Church there at that time, and the close and constant connection between North-west Africa and Italy, to its establishment at a much earlier date.

We have briefly traced the history and rapid progress of the Christian Religion throughout most of the known world during the first three centuries, and are forced to the conclusion that its remarkable growth, and its victory over the religious systems of the earth, cannot be looked upon merely as the result of human efforts. Many circumstances served to combine to bring about the natural spread of a knowledge of Christianity throughout the Roman world, such as the vast extent of the Roman Empire, an almost universal similarity of language, viz., Greek, the intercourse between Rome and her provinces, trade carried on among the various nations ; all these combined, it is true, to assist in its spread, but were by no means sufficient to account for the results produced. We are forced to conclude that its spread and universal diffusion, in face of the forces opposed to it by its enemies both within and without, must be attributed to the guiding hand of God Himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PETER'S PRIMACY CONTINUED IN THE PAPACY

FROM its commencement the Church has existed as an organised society, and, from the time of St Peter, the Bishop of Rome has been recognised as its supreme head upon earth. Peter's position and that of his successors, who were to inherit his power, is clearly expressed by Christ Himself in His command, " Feed My lambs ; feed My

sheep" (John xxi. 15-17). Endowed with authority from above conferred in these words, the fisherman of Galilee takes his place at the head of the Church, whose unity it is his task to maintain.

And his successors in the See of Rome, by virtue of the same authority, take upon themselves the task of governing the whole Church and safeguarding its unity, that unity which was to be one of the distinguishing marks of the Church of Christ upon earth: "I pray for them who through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me*" (John xvii. 20, 21). The highest spiritual power rests in their hands, for to the end of time the Bishop of Rome is destined to be the supreme pastor of the whole Church. The words uttered by our Lord to St Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18), can never lose their import even with Peter's successors, as they would be meaningless if they did not apply to them with the same force as to him. Therefore, when St Peter came to Rome and fixed his See in the capital of the world, the dignity enjoyed by him was not destined to expire with his death.

If during the first three centuries the exercise of the Roman Primacy appears only at intervals, one need hardly be astonished. Those were days of almost continuous persecution, when its employment would naturally be most difficult and dangerous. The faithful were less numerous than in the succeeding centuries, and almost all were animated with the same spirit of loyalty and devotion to the Church. Recourse, then, to the supreme authority was but seldom called for; but such appeals as have come down to us are an unmistakable proof of the essential prerogatives of the See of Rome.

The Primacy of the Popes, therefore, especially in the critical days of the first three centuries, did not stand out at once in all the glare of its exterior development. It was, as it were, veiled beneath the dignity of the Roman bishops. The needs which ultimately determined all its powers did not as yet exist, nor could any human mind as yet conceive the plan of its development. The Popes themselves subordinated their intervention to circumstances, and to the necessity of maintaining the unity of the Church and of preserving intact her traditional teaching in regard to faith and morals.

It is easy, then, to understand why the universal authority of the Popes was less apparent in the earlier days of the Church than it was later; nor ought we to be surprised at this when we consider that the course of its development is in exact agreement with that supernatural direction promised by the Divine Founder of the Church: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). He Himself had furnished the essentials of what constituted the Kingdom of God upon earth, and His promise was the guarantee that the future development of the ecclesiastical organisation should never depart from the general rules established by Himself. Development, then, was necessary, just as the

full-grown plant is developed from the original seed, just as the oak, springing from the acorn, grows and braves the storms of centuries. Of our Lord Himself it was said : " He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men " (Luke ii. 52) ; i.e., He increased in grace by displaying, as He advanced in age, the gifts of grace with which He was endowed at the very moment of His conception.

It would indeed be a grave mistake were we to misunderstand the action of the Papacy during the first three centuries. It can be clearly seen from facts that the Popes themselves were fully conscious of their supreme power, a power that has ever been recognised as well by the Church as a whole as by the most influential of its bishops. The Christian Fathers, moreover, and writers of antiquity speak in no uncertain tone of the Primacy and prerogatives of Peter and his successors in the See of Rome.* Nor are examples in plenty wanting in proof of this. The beautiful epitaph of Abercius, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, furnishes us with a remarkable example of the wonderful fascination exercised on the Christian by the Roman Primacy. Abercius styles himself a disciple, or rather a member, of the flock of the sainted Shepherd whose sheep graze on the hills and in the vales, and whose watchful care nothing escapes.

CHAPTER XXIX

HIERARCHY OF THE CHURCH—CLERICAL CELIBACY —ASCETICISM

WITH the growth of the Church, says Gilmartin,† it became necessary to separate the two grades of the hierarchy, viz., the *Episcopi* and the *Presbyteri*, and to transfer the duties of the Priesthood to a separate class of ecclesiastics who were to be subject to the Bishops. Such a class must have existed at the beginning of the second century, for St Ignatius of Antioch, who died in 107, draws a clear distinction between Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. " Let each of you," he says, writing to the Christians of Smyrna, " obey his Bishop as Christ did His Father, and as Priests the Apostles, and give honour to the Deacons as to God's commandments." Again, writing to the Ephesians, he says : " You revered Priests are attached to the Bishop as are the harp-strings to the harp." All the early Christian writers after the time of St. Ignatius, who refer to the matter at all, mention Bishops and Priests as distinct classes.

Generally there were only *seven Deacons* in each Church, and as that number did not always suffice for the duties they were called upon to perform, helpers had to be provided for them by the Bishops, a fact which gave rise to the *Minor Orders*. If we regard these lesser orders as detached portions of the Diaconate, we find that they have an ecclesiastical as well as a Divine origin; ecclesiastical, if we isolate them with reference to their source; Divine, if we consider

* See Hedde, I, 68-74.

† Vol. I, p. 287

them as included in the Diaconate, since they thus go back to the time of the Apostles, and therefore to Christ.

The order of *Lector* would seem to date from the Apostolic age* ; the other orders are not clearly mentioned till after the third century, although it is very probable that they go back to the second century or even further.

The Greek Church never recognised, and even to-day does not recognise, more than two orders of minor clerics, viz., *Sub-deacons* and *Lectors* ; while the Latin Church distinctly recognised five, viz., *Sub-deacons*, who from the eleventh or twelfth century were ranked among the major orders, *Acolytes*, *Exorcists*, *Lectors*, and *Porters*. In the year 251, Pope St Cornelius counted at Rome 46 Priests, 7 Deacons, 7 Sub-deacons, 42 Acolytes, and 52 Exorcists, Lectors, and Porters.

CLERICAL CELIBACY.—Although for the first two or three centuries of the Church no special law seems to have been in force in regard to Clerical Celibacy, yet the example of our Lord and His Blessed Mother, and the special love of our Saviour for the virgin disciple John, together with His requiring in the more perfect of His disciples that they should be ready to forsake father or mother or wife or children for love of Him, prove to us that, even in the primitive Church, celibacy was regarded as a holier state than that of matrimony. The clergy especially were taught to regard a life of celibacy more in keeping with the holiness of their office and the sacredness of their functions. Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, then, after the example of the Apostles, for the most part led a life of strict continency ; nor could it be otherwise in a society where continency was ever held in the highest esteem. After the clergy, the consecrated virgins held the first rank, and next to them came the consecrated widows ; does it not follow, then, as a natural consequence, that the Christian community would be loath to choose for its ministers men considered inferior in rank to the virgins and the widows ?

From the time of the Apostles there exists in the Church an ever-growing tendency towards the perfect continency of its clerics. This had its foundation not only in the words of certain passages of the New Testament, but still more in the ineffable dignity and grandeur of the Christian Priesthood. The Jewish Priest had to remain continent during his service in the Temple ; how much superior ought to be the Christian Priest who offers the Immaculate Lamb ?

Yet this perfect continency was not easy to obtain in all candidates for the sacred office. In the very early days of the Church these had to be sought for even in the ranks of the married ; and celibacy among the Jews as well as among the pagans was generally looked upon with disdain. It thus became difficult to find, among the unmarried, a sufficient number of subjects endowed with the wished-for qualities that would befit them for the ranks of the clergy. In

* See Marion, Vol. I, 275.

the Roman Empire, moreover, we find laws enacted against the state of celibacy.

St Paul's First Epistle to Timothy, iii. 2 and 12, probably marks the first stage towards direct legislation in regard to clerical celibacy : " It behoveth a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife . . . chaste, etc.: Deacons in like manner, chaste, etc." It will be noted that St Paul, after speaking of Bishops, passes on to Deacons without naming Priests, from the fact that Priests were included in the former title, and everything that he said of Bishops was applicable to them also. A Bishop, then, or a Priest, or a Deacon must be a man who has never been married but once, or to one wife. It is true, as we have seen, that, at this time, a man might be chosen to be a Bishop, or a Priest, or a Deacon, whose wife was living, but they are generally believed to have lived the rest of their lives apart. Moreover, it soon became the law that those who had been admitted to the major orders should never marry under pain of being deposed from their sacred office. Bishop St Paphnutius, at the Council of Nice (325), already speaks of this as " the ancient tradition of the Church."

The law seems later to have been relaxed in the case of Deacons. The Council of Ancyra (314) allowed the marriage of a Deacon, if at the time of his election he made a declaration of his inability to lead a celibate life. Such a one was allowed to continue in his ministry because the Bishop, at the time of his ordination, had allowed it to pass thus. But if, on the contrary, he had remained silent on the matter, his ordination bound him to celibacy, and marriage later meant deposition from his sacred office. Such as had received only the Sub-diaconate and the other minor orders were free, the Sub-diaconate not being at that time ranked among the higher orders.

No one, then, was allowed to marry after receiving major orders, and we find many leading a life of perfect continency who had received major orders after their marriage. The Council of Nice did not venture to make this law binding in the East, but later, even there also, one who had received major orders was forbidden to marry, and strict continency was imposed on all the Bishops.

ASCETICISM.—By Ascetics we mean persons of either sex who, by observing the evangelical counsels, aimed at a higher degree of Christian perfection. They led a life of celibacy or virginity, they abstained for the most part from meat and from wine and made long fasts, they practised great austerities and devoted much time to prayer and to works of charity. Some still continued to live in the bosom of their families, and, without quitting the world, led a life of asceticism properly so-called.

Others lived a life of absolute solitude either near the towns or at a distance from them, in the country or even in desert places : these were termed *anchorites* or hermits. Others again formed themselves into a community and lived, cut off from the rest of the world, under

the direction of a superior who was one of their number. Such were called *cenobites* or monks. It was from among the ascetics that the Church looked chiefly for candidates for the priesthood.

Women who devoted themselves to a life of asceticism were divided into three classes, *Virgins*, *Widows*, and *Deaconesses*. The Virgins received a solemn consecration at the hands of the Bishop, and made a public promise that they would never marry. They soon began to wear a distinctive dress, and had a special place reserved for them in the church. The same may be said of the Widows. The Deaconesses were recruited chiefly from the Widows, sometimes from the Virgins. Their chief duties were to look after the sick, to give instruction in religious knowledge to female catechumens, and to assist the Bishop in their baptism.

Ascetics, properly so-called, go back in the history of the Church to the earliest times, but we have no certain knowledge that *Anchorites* were to be found before the third, or *Cenobites* before the fourth century.

What may be truly regarded as the beginning of Christian *Anchoretic* life, may be traced to the days of the Decian persecution, when many who had fled for safety to the deserts did not return even after the danger was past, but there, retired from the world, they continued to lead a life of contemplation and prayer. In Egypt especially they soon became very numerous. St Paul of Thebes, of whom mention has already been made (p. 45), is called by St Jerome the founder of the anchoretic life. He withdrew into the desert at the time of the Decian persecution, and is the first Christian solitary whom we know. He died in 340 at the age of 113 years.

The first Christian *Cenobites* whose existence is beyond dispute, are those who, in Egypt, gathered around St Anthony for spiritual guidance and instruction. St Anthony, like St Paul, reached a venerable old age. He died at the age of 105, in the year 356. One of his disciples, St Hilarion (292–371), carried out his master's work in Palestine, where, in the desert near Gaza, he spent many years in recollection and prayer, and in the practice of the most austere penance.

CHAPTER XXX

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION—THE HOLY EUCHARIST—THE AGAPÈ—DISCIPLINA ARCANI

BAPTISM.—It is by Baptism that all are admitted as members of the Church. In the very early days of the Church, as we may gather from the *Acts of the Apostles*, Baptism was administered to all who, with a sincere sorrow for their sins, professed their belief in Jesus Christ, and who were willing to receive it: “They had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men, brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptised every one of you in the Name of Jesus

Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 37, 38). Soon, however, even before the end of the Apostolic age, a time of preparation and probation was required of the newly converted, lasting as long as two or even three years, but the period might be shortened for the sick. Before the end of the third century, we find the *catechumens*, as they were called, divided into two classes, *Audientes* (hearers) and *Electi* or *Competentes* (elect or approved).

The Hearers were instructed either apart, or together with the faithful, but were not allowed to take any part in the Divine Service. The Elect, who were more advanced in sacred knowledge, were allowed to join the rest of the faithful in the recitation of certain prayers, and to receive kneeling the blessing of the Bishop. The *missa catechumenorum* continued only as far as the offertory, when the catechumens were dismissed, but, from the moment of the Offertory, the Mass was continued for the faithful with closed doors.

The instruction of the catechumens was gradual, and in strict accord with what was known as the *Discipline of the Secret*, by which Jews, infidels, and even catechumens, were excluded from some of the ecclesiastical ceremonies and from the knowledge of certain mysteries of religion. Such mysteries as the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Holy Eucharist and all the other Sacraments, were divulged only to the faithful.

The Elect, who had successfully passed through their course of probation and training, were presented for Baptism on the vigils of the great feasts of Easter and Pentecost, as also at Epiphany among the Greeks. The ceremony was preceded by a renunciation, by the neophytes, of Satan and all his works and pomps ; and after reciting the Pater and the Credo, they were plunged three times into the water in the name of the Trinity, at each plunge the minister repeating the name of one of the three Divine Persons. The Bishop was assisted by a deacon or a deaconess, according as the one baptised was a man or a woman, and as early as the days of Tertullian we read of god-fathers and god-mothers being required especially at the baptism of infants. Immediately after the ceremony the newly-baptised received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of the Bishop, who, praying and imposing his hands upon them, anointed their foreheads with the sacred chrism ; he then gave them Holy Communion. The baptismal feast lasted eight days, during which the neophytes retained their *white robes*, a fact which gave rise to the term *Dominica in albis*.

Such, then, were the principal ceremonies of solemn Baptism ; but in cases of necessity, as for example sickness, Baptism might be administered at any time, without regard to the day or the hour, and that by *effusion*, or *aspersion*, or by a *single immersion*. The ordinary minister of Baptism was a Bishop : Priests and Deacons were allowed to administer it solemnly only with his permission, in which case Confirmation was afterwards administered by the Bishop. In a case of necessity, however, anyone was allowed to baptise, but a woman only in the absence of men. If it were possible, the

newly-baptised was then taken to the Bishop to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

From the time of the Apostles, infant baptism was practised, especially if the child were ill or in danger of death. Soon, however, arose the abuse of deferring the reception of Baptism till the approach of death, in the hope that the newly-baptised might have the good fortune to pass out of this life in the white robes of recovered innocence.

If a catechumen were to suffer martyrdom, the shedding of his blood for Christ's sake took the place of the Sacrament (*baptismus sanguinis*). The Baptism of *desire*, likewise, or the wish to receive the Baptism of water, if accompanied with perfect charity, also supplied the place of the Sacrament in the case of those who were unable to receive it. By Baptism the catechumen took his rank among the faithful, and henceforth shared in the rights and privileges of the Christian life. The long catechumenate of early days gradually died out, but a lengthened course of instruction was generally required before one could be admitted as a member of the Church.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.—In the early Church, the Holy Eucharist was, as it is to-day, the very centre of Catholic worship, just as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was, and is, the first and chiefest part of Catholic religious service. The Fathers who wrote in the very early days of Christianity bear most convincing testimony to what has been the constant teaching of the Church on this her central doctrine. We find St Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of St Peter, writing thus of the heretics of his day who denied the reality of Christ's body in the Blessed Eucharist : “ They stray from the Eucharist and prayer, because they do not believe that the Eucharist is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the very flesh which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, in His goodness, raised from the dead.” Here we recognise in the Church, even in the days of St Ignatius who, as far back as the year 68, was Bishop of Antioch, the belief that the Eucharist contains the Body of Jesus Christ, the very same Body that was delivered for us for the remission of our sins.

Again, St Justin, who died in 167, after speaking of the consecration of the bread and the wine, compares the prayer of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper to the word of God : by the latter the Word was made flesh ; by the prayer of our Saviour, bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ ; a change as real as that of the Incarnation.

St Irenaeus, who died in 202, tells us that the Church received from the Apostles, and taught throughout the world, this doctrine, that bread and wine are changed by consecration into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, a truth acknowledged even by his opponents.

The celebration of the HOLY MASS (*Liturgia*) is spoken of in no uncertain terms even by the very earliest writers of the Church. St Irenaeus tells us that our Saviour, in instituting the Holy Eucharist,

taught the new oblation of the New Testament, and that the Church, having received this Oblation from the Apostles, offers it to God throughout the whole world.

Clement of Alexandria exhibits to us the Eucharistic Sacrifice as prefigured by the sacrifice of Melchisedech ; and St Cyprian asks : " Who was more a priest of God than our Saviour Jesus Christ, who offered to God the Father what Melchisedech before Him had offered, viz., bread and wine, now changed into His own Body and Blood ? . . . Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our God, is Himself the High Priest of God the Father, and the first to offer Himself to His Father in sacrifice. He moreover commanded that the same should be done in memory of Him ; so that the priest, acting in the name of Christ, does what Christ Himself does, i.e., he offers in the Church a sacrifice real and complete to God the Father."

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whose rites and accompanying prayers are so clearly related by the most ancient authors, was, during the first century at any rate, celebrated in the evening. Up to the Offertory it was called the Mass of the Catechumens, and, from the Offertory to the end, the Mass of the Faithful.

It began by the reading of passages from the Old Testament, prayers, and the singing of psalms, to be followed by passages taken from the *Acts* or the *Epistles* of the Apostles. Next was read a passage from one of the *Gospels*, at the conclusion of which a homily upon it was delivered by the presiding bishop. This ended the *Mass of the Catechumens*, when they, and those penitents who were still under the ban of public penance, were dismissed. On their departure began the *Missa Fidelium* (the Mass of the Faithful), the principal parts of which were the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion.

Then, in presence of the faithful who alone remained, the deacons laid upon the altar such part of the offerings of the faithful as were necessary for the Sacrifice and for Holy Communion, bread and wine mingled with a little water. The words of Consecration of the bread and the wine were substantially the same both in the Greek and in the Latin Churches, viz., the words used by our Lord at the Last Supper. The Consecration was followed by a prayer to which the faithful responded by saying Amen.

It was the custom for all the faithful to receive Holy Communion before leaving ; and one who had been unable to attend in person might receive even at his own home. The order of approaching the Holy Table was according to rank as follows : first the priests, deacons, and clerics ; and after them, in order, the religious or ascetics, the deaconesses, and the consecrated virgins and widows. The sacred species were given with the words "Corpus Christi" (The Body of Christ). "Sanguis Christi ! Calix Vitae !" (The Blood of Christ, The Chalice of Life) respectively ; to which the recipient replied "Amen." While Communion was being given, psalms were sung ; and prayers and the solemn benediction of the bishop brought the Mass to a close.

When giving Communion, the celebrant placed the Eucharistic Bread in each one's hand, not in his mouth. Close after the celebrant came a deacon with the chalice, containing the Precious Blood, which he presented to all except the priests and the deacons. The priests took the chalice themselves, then offered it to the deacons.

Often the Blessed Eucharist was given under the appearance of bread alone, either leavened or unleavened, as, for example, when it was conveyed to the homes of the faithful for the sick, and, in times of persecution, to those imprisoned for the faith. It was given—but under the appearance of wine only—to newly baptised infants.

The Liturgy of the Mass, i.e., the prayers and ceremonies used in its celebration, remained everywhere substantially the same, although secondary differences soon began to creep in. Thus there was a Western form and an Eastern form, from which many others arose, particularly about the fourth century.

When the Holy Sacrifice was offered in the Catacombs, it was offered either on the tomb or near the tomb of a martyr. Hence the custom arose, after the days of persecution, of placing in the altar of every Church relics of the martyrs who, like their Divine Master, had offered their lives in sacrifice : " I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held " (Apoc. vi. 9).

THE AGAPÈ, OR THE LOVE FEAST.—Connected with the Eucharistic feast was a friendly repast called the Agapè. At the Offertory we have seen the deacon placing on the altar part of the gifts presented by the faithful, the rest being reserved for the Agapè repast, a fraternal feast symbolic of Christian charity, and at the same time used as a means of preserving it. In the very early days of the Church this took place before the Holy Sacrifice, in memory of our Saviour's last paschal supper ; but later it would seem to have followed, and was accompanied with prayer, the singing of psalms, and the reading of portions of the Scriptures. What still remained over after the feast was reserved for the poor and the sick.

Abuses, however, soon began to creep in, and in time the Eucharistic sacrifice was separated from the Agapè by being celebrated in the morning ; and the growing custom of receiving the Holy Eucharist fasting helped to bring the practice to an end. Towards the middle of the second century the practice was abolished, and if we read of Agapès after this period, we must remember that they had no connection with the Holy Sacrifice.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SECRET (*Disciplina arcani*).—The Discipline of the Secret was introduced, it would seem, towards the end of the first century, and lasted till long after the persecutions had ceased, even well into the fifth century. It is suggested that it arose probably from the use of our Lord's words : " Give not that

which is holy to dogs ; neither cast ye pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, tear you" (Matt. vii. 6). But whatever may have been its origin, the Christians took care, as far as possible, to keep the knowledge of the Sacred Mysteries a secret from the uninitiated, extending it especially to the Sacraments, and above all to the Holy Eucharist and the Divine Sacrifice, to the Blessed Trinity, and even to the Sign of the Cross and the Crucifixion. The persecutions rendered such extreme caution necessary ; the constant fear of surprise, and the intrusion of spies even among the catechumens, compelled the faithful ever to be on their guard. Thus instruction was given to the catechumens only by word of mouth, the more sublime truths were strictly reserved for the baptised ; hence it came about that the catechumens were excluded from the Mass of the Faithful.

When one spoke or wrote of the sacred mysteries, the secret was maintained by the use of such metaphorical expressions as could not fail to be understood by the initiated ; hence, in the writings of the early Fathers, the frequent use of such expressions as : "The initiated know what I mean" : " May he who understands these things pray for me."

But this secret was not confined to words and writings, it was extended, too, to the most telling symbols, such as those of the fish, the anchor, the ship, the lamb, the basket and loaves, etc. "Children of the Fish (*Iχθύς*), receive from the Saviour of the elect nourishment as sweet as honey ; take, eat and drink ; thou bearest in thy hand the Fish : Divine Ichthus (fish), hear my prayer."* And again, the inscription of St Abercius, which dates from the second century : " Faith led me wherever I went. Everywhere she set before me a good fish taken from the fountain, a very great and spotless fish which a pure Virgin conceived. This fish she gave to friends to eat, and with bread a delicious wine mingled with water."

A very expressive symbol found, and believed to date back to the second century, is that of a fish bearing on its back a basket on the top of which appear a number of loaves, and within, a cup represented as containing a red liquid, evidently wine. Here, then, we have the Fish, bread and wine. The Fish, as we have already seen on page 62, brought to the minds of the Christians Jesus Christ in His twofold nature, *I(ησοῦς) X(ριστός) Θ(εοῦ) Y(ios) Σ(ωτήρ)*, Jesus, Christ, of God, the Son, Saviour ; while the bread and wine typified His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament under these appearances. Could the definition of the Holy Eucharist given in the catechism be more clearly expressed in symbol than that by which it was known to the initiated as far back as the second century ? " The Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of Bread and Wine."

* Epitaph of Pectorius (probably third century).

CHAPTER XXXI

SUNDAYS—STATION-DAYS—FEASTS—PRAYER—
CHURCHES

THE Jews observed the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, as the day of rest, in memory of God's resting on the seventh day from the works of creation. This day God blessed and sanctified, and imposed on the Jews the command to keep it holy. By Apostolic tradition, however, the day of rest has been transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week, Sunday, the Lord's Day (*Dominica*), to show that the Jewish ceremonies were abolished, and to honour the great mysteries of our religion ; for it was on a Sunday that our Lord in His human nature rose again from the dead, that He appeared to the Apostles and gave them power to forgive sins and to teach all nations, and that He sent down the Holy Ghost upon His Church—all which things are calculated in a special manner to excite our piety, and to give this day a rank above all other days.

The Jewish converts to Christianity continued for a time to observe the Sabbath as well as the Sunday, a practice at first tolerated by the Church, but soon forbidden. Sunday was a day of prayer and spiritual joy, on which one neither fasted nor performed any unnecessary servile work.

Wednesdays and Fridays were kept as days of special devotion by the early Christians—as days of prayer and fasting in honour of our Lord's Passion. The fast was continued till three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour at which Christ died upon the cross, for which reason these days were spoken of as "half-fasts" (*semijejunia*), to distinguish them from the strict fasting days on which no food was allowed till evening. They were called *Station-days* probably from the fact that on these days the faithful remained standing (*statio*) during the public prayers, and, like soldiers at their post, remained watching and fasting. Between Easter and Pentecost, owing to the joyful nature of the season, when even fasting was prohibited, the stations were not observed.

Besides Sunday, the early Christians observed as religious festivals *Easter* and *Pentecost* to celebrate the Resurrection of our Saviour and the Descent of the Holy Ghost respectively. The fifty days separating these two festivals were looked upon as days of special rejoicing, and, as we have seen above, fasting on them was forbidden, though the faithful had to say their prayers standing in honour of the Resurrection.

The feast of the *EPIPHANY* (Jan. 6) was celebrated in the East, probably from the third century. It was kept originally in memory of our Lord's manifestation of Himself to the world by his baptism and the miracle of Cana in Galilee, as well as through the Magi.

It was also meant to include the *Nativity*, or the manifestation of Himself by His birth into the world ; but, soon, Christmas began to be celebrated as a special feast apart.

The ASCENSION seems to have been generally observed from the third century, but must have had its origin at a much earlier period, as St Augustine speaks of it in his time as of a feast long established in the Church.

From the middle of the third century dates the CALENDAR of the Saints, which had its origin in the custom of recalling their names at the Holy Sacrifice on the anniversary of their martyrdom. The martyrs were the first of the saints to be honoured with a feast, and the anniversary of their death was ever regarded as the anniversary of their birth in heaven (*dies natalis*). Later, the same honour was paid to Confessors. As yet there was no feast in honour of our Lady, though devotion to her and confidence in her protection were universally recognised ; hence we have the words of St Irenaeus : " Just as death was brought upon mankind through a virgin, so through a Virgin was salvation to come."

The Christians attached great importance to PRAYER, union with God by prayer being the ideal of the Christian's life. They loved to pray in common, and had certain fixed hours for prayer. Both Jews and Christians regulated their times of prayer according to the divisions of the Roman civil day, starting from six o'clock in the morning : hence *Prime* (6-9), *Terce* (9-12), *Sext* (12-3), and *None* (3-6). Both Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria mention the last three as times devoted to prayer in common ; and on Pentecost-day, we read how the Apostles were assembled in prayer when the Holy Ghost descended upon them at the ninth hour ; how St Peter went to the upper story of his house to pray at the twelfth hour ; and that he and St John were about to enter the Temple at the third hour on the occasion of their healing the lame man.

The SIGN OF THE CROSS was held in great esteem by the early Christians. The Sufferings and Death of Christ on the Cross afforded them the most striking proof of His love ; and hence Tertullian, speaking for the very early Christians, says : " Whenever we move, at our coming in and going out, when we sit down to table, when we retire to rest, we imprint on our foreheads the Sign of the Cross."

WHERE THE EARLY CHRISTIANS ASSEMBLED FOR WORSHIP.—From the account given by St Luke of the manner of living of the early converts, we see how they clung to the teaching of the Apostles, and how united they were in faith and charity : " They persevered in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers " (Acts ii. 42). Frequently they went to the Temple to pray together on the days and at the hours appointed, just as our Lord and His Apostles had been accustomed to do, the special hours appointed for prayer being, as we have seen above,

the third, the sixth, and the ninth hour—i.e., nine o'clock in the morning, noon, and three o'clock in the afternoon.

The Apostles themselves had been in the habit of preaching in Solomon's Porch, a porch outside the Temple proper, and so large that many might assemble under its shelter ; yet for the Breaking of Bread they passed from house to house, thus making use of one another's private houses that they might conceal the Sacred Mysteries from the gaze of the profane. The custom of the faithful assembling for religious worship in private houses must have been long continued. In Rome we find St Peter lodging at the house of the Senator Pudens, who, with his wife Priscilla and his family, had been converted to the faith ; and here it was that he celebrated the Sacred Mysteries and ordained priests. Later, also in Rome, we find the houses of Lucina, Anastasia, Cecilia, and others, and at Ephesus the house of Aquila and Priscilla, serving a like purpose ; so that, in the beginning, the houses of the Christians took the place of churches.

The Christians seem to have built churches as places of worship at Rome only after the persecution of Severus, and worshipped in such oratories and chapels as the persecutions permitted of ; but the most sacred of these were afterwards converted into churches. During the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian we find mentioned the destruction of the Christians' churches, a fact which leads us to conclude that in the first half of the third century the Christians were accustomed to worship in churches (*ecclesiae*), or in buildings set apart exclusively for the purpose of Divine worship.

CHAPTER XXXII

PENANCE AND PENITENTIAL DISCIPLINE—MARRIAGE

OUR Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance when, appearing to the Apostles on the day of His Resurrection, He said to them : “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them ; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained ” (John xx. 22, 23) ; and the Church has at all times taught that she possesses the power to forgive sins. Even the early Christian sects that fell away from her have continued to claim and to exercise this power.

Now the power of binding and loosing is never exercised except by an exterior sensible rite, that is, by the Sacrament of Penance, which is a *tribunal* of mercy and reconciliation ; and those who have received this power are established judges in regard to conscience, and dispense justice to sinners by pronouncing the sentence which remits or retains sin.

But they cannot pronounce their verdict without a knowledge of the cause they are called upon to judge, and this knowledge can be got only from the lips of the penitent. The sinner, then, must appear at the tribunal of Penance, and must accuse himself by making known to the priest the grave sins at least of which he is guilty, and this with

a sincere sorrow of heart and with a firm purpose of amendment for the future.

This power of binding and loosing we find St Paul making use of in the case of the incestuous Corinthian (2 Cor. ii.), as well as in that of Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. i. 20); and Eusebius recounts the touching story how St John reconciled to the Church the young man who had become the leader of a band of robbers and assassins. Many other examples also are to be found in the earliest ecclesiastical writers of pardon being granted to such as sought it in the proper dispositions. This POWER, then, OF THE KEYS, this power to remit sin, the Church believed that it held from Jesus Christ, and practised it; and when a Christian had the misfortune to fall into grave sin, he addressed himself to the Church, that is, to the bishop or priest who could relieve him of the burden of his guilt.

Confession of sin was rigorously required from the earliest times, and at first took one of three forms: it might be *public*, that is, before clergy and people; *semi-public*, before the clergy; or *secret*, to the bishop or priest alone. The first two cases were always preceded by a secret confession so that the confessor might be in a position to judge whether a public confession was necessary, and could be made without scandal being given. A public confession was required of persons who were guilty of public sin, particularly the sins of idolatry, adultery, and murder, or whose sin had become public by chance. Secret sins were required to be confessed in secret only, unless the confessors advised it otherwise, or the penitent wished it otherwise for his own greater humiliation; but public confession was never exacted except for sins publicly known. A sinner was never admitted to a second public penance for the same public sin, and could make his peace with God only by an act of perfect contrition or of perfect charity.

Public sinners, besides being required to make a public confession of their sins, had to submit to a penance lasting sometimes for years, if not for life; and as crimes became more frequent, the Church, by her sacred canons, determined not only the nature of the penance to be imposed but likewise its duration. Her collection of penitential canons was called the *Poenitentiale*.

From a letter written by St Gregory Thaumaturgus about the middle of the third century we find that, at that time, the PENITENTS, or those undergoing a course of public penance, were divided into four classes, namely:

The WEEPERS (*flentes*), or those who were forbidden to enter the church, and had to remain prostrate in the porch and, with tears, beg the prayers of those who entered.

The HEARERS (*audientes*), or those who were allowed to take their place in church with the catechumens, and to remain for the reading of the Scriptures and the sermon. At that point they were compelled to withdraw.

The KNEELERS (*substrati, genuflectentes*), who were allowed to

remain kneeling in the body of the church for the prayers which followed the reading of the Scriptures and for the blessing of the bishop.

The STANDERS (*consistentes*), or those who were permitted to remain even till the end of the *Missa Fidelium*, but were not allowed to present anything for the Offertory or to receive Holy Communion.

An *Indulgence*, or a remission of this temporal punishment or its mitigation, might be obtained in certain cases ; for example, in danger of death, or if persecution threatened ; or a petition for mercy (*libellus pacis*) might be obtained in their favour from a confessor, or from one about to suffer martyrdom : or even extraordinary sorrow on the part of the penitent might merit such an indulgence.

This right of the Church, derived from the *Power of the Keys*, to grant indulgences, the Church has at all times made use of. St Paul (2 Cor. ii. 10), *in the person* and by the authority of Christ, granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian, whom he had put under a severe penance, by remitting part of the temporal punishment due to his sin ; and in times of persecution the practice of the Church to grant *libelli pacis* to this same end was common.

The penitential discipline of the Church underwent many important changes ; thus we find the regulations and customs of the early Church very different from those of to-day. Public confession was abolished probably by the end of the fourth century, and private confession declared sufficient, particularly in the case of such sins as might draw upon the sinner the attention of the State. Yet the changes brought about in the course of centuries are merely disciplinary ; the doctrine of the Church in regard to the Sacrament of Penance is, and must ever be, the same. As in the early days, so now, the Church claims that she holds the *Power of the Keys*, and this power she continues to exercise through the ministry of her bishops and priests ; and as a condition of the pardon of mortal sin she requires the threefold obligation of Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.

MARRIAGE.—Both St Paul and Tertullian speak of matrimony as a great Sacrament, ever regarded by the Christians as a symbol of Christ's union with His Church, and an indissoluble bond sanctified by her. " This is a great Sacrament : but I speak in Christ, and in the Church " (Eph. v. 32). " Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it " (Eph. v. 25). " How can we describe," says Tertullian, " the happiness of a marriage contracted in presence of the Church, during the Holy Sacrifice, sanctified by the blessing of the priest, announced by angels, and authorised by the God of Heaven ? "

Marriage always took place in presence of the bishop or the priest, at whose hands the parties received the nuptial blessing ; and only for a man who had lost his wife by death, or for a woman who had lost her husband, was it lawful to marry again ; but this right of marrying a second time was rarely made use of, as a second marriage,

though allowed by St Paul, was regarded in the early Church as a weakness ill-becoming a Christian. Marriage with a pagan was discouraged and sometimes forbidden, and the union contracted before conversion was maintained as long as the infidel party consented to live in peace ; otherwise the *privilege of the Apostle* might be put into force : “ But if the unbeliever depart, let him depart. For a brother or a sister is not under servitude in such cases ” (1 Cor. vii. 15).

CHAPTER XXXIII

EXTREME UNCTION—CHRISTIAN BURIAL

EXTREME UNCTION.—The Sacrament of Extreme Unction, also called the Sacrament of the sick and of the dying, because it was instituted in favour of the dying, we find hinted at by St Mark, “ He could not do any miracles there, only that He cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them ” (vi. 5), and promulgated by St James, Apostle and cousin of our Lord, “ Is any man sick among you ? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man ; and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him ” (v. 14, 15).

Here we have the Divine institution of this Sacrament, for who but God could give to an outward sign the power to forgive sin and impart grace ? The Apostle also enjoins the constant use of the Sacrament, giving us at the same time the *subject* of the Sacrament or the person to whom it may be administered, the *minister*, the *matter and form*, and the *effects*. From the words, “ Let him bring in the *priests* of the Church,” we learn that no one below a priest, not even a deacon, can confer this Sacrament.

Yet it does not appear that the administration of Extreme Unction was as general in the first three centuries of the Church as it became afterwards. In the early Church it was held as a maxim that the Sacred Mysteries should be kept secret except when it was necessary to speak of them. Now there was no necessity for the Christians to speak of this mystery either for the purpose of refuting the calumnies of the pagans, to whom it was unknown, or of instructing the catechumens, who were under no necessity of receiving it ; but it was quite fitting, and even necessary, that the catechumens be instructed in the mysteries of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist, since, on the day of their reception into the Church, these three Sacraments were administered to them.

Moreover in those early days Christians and pagans were so intermingled that the administration of this Sacrament would be impossible without exposing it to the view of unbelievers, and thus causing sacrileges and stirring up persecutions. Even in the same family, the father or mother, or some of the children and slaves, might be Christian, the others infidel ; to say nothing of the neighbours

by whom they found themselves surrounded. Nor could the ministers of the Church pass freely from house to house without exposing themselves to suspicion and danger. This difficulty was regarded as being so serious that the faithful were sometimes permitted to carry the Blessed Eucharist to their own homes to communicate themselves for the sick ; but they never could administer Extreme Unction.

It was not till after the third century, when regular discipline gradually became established, that the faithful were enabled to enjoy to the full all the advantages held out to them by the Church, one of the most consoling of these being the Sacrament of Extreme Unction at the near approach of death.

We have seen Extreme Unction practised in the time of the Apostles, while Origen speaks of it as the continuation and completion of the Sacrament of Penance, and as a means of purifying the soul from sin, whence it comes that the power of administering it belongs to priests alone. St Eusebius, who was Pope in 310, expressly points out the time for receiving this great Sacrament, the Sacrament of *hope* for the dying.*

CHRISTIAN BURIAL.—When a Christian died, the body was reverently consigned to the earth. Cremation, or the burning of the bodies of the dead, though frequently practised in ancient times, was abhorred by the Jews, and was opposed by the Church from the beginning. At the commencement of the Christian era cremation and interment were equally practised by the Greeks, but by the Romans cremation had become common in the later days of the Republic. Cremation, moreover, which might be regarded as the natural emblem of the total destruction of man after death, and as destroying all hope of a resurrection, caused the practice to be shunned both by Jew and Christian as an act of impiety.

What may be regarded as the first Christian cemeteries were the gardens or villas of a few rich Christians, who, out of charity, offered the use of their own private property for this purpose to their brethren in religion ; although, in Rome, in the very early days of the Church, both Jews and Christians, by clinging to their own rites of burial, secured from the State the privilege of possessing cemeteries collectively, the “sleeping-places” of their dead, a word derived from the Greek *koimao*, signifying “I put to sleep.” These cemeteries were of two kinds, those exposed to view, and those underground, the Catacombs spoken of above (p. 61).

In the Catacombs (*κατα*, down, *κύβος*, a hollow), the Christians laid to rest, with tender devotion, the mangled remains of their martyrs for the faith ; here, too, they sought a retreat in times of persecution ; and at all times they could assemble here for worship and for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, away from the public gaze, for, even in times of peace, the public practice of their religion was often dangerous. In the walls of the passages the graves, or *loculi*, rose in tiers, varying in number according to the height of the

* See Gaume, *Catech. of Perseverance*, Vol. II, 531.

passage, and were closed with tiles or marble slabs generally bearing rude but touching inscriptions. These might give the age and date of death of the deceased, or might express a wish in regard to the life after death : *In Christo vivas* ; *Vivas in Deo* ; *Vivas in aeternum* ; *Vivas in gloria* ; *Pete pro nobis* ; *In pace*. The palm and vials of blood were emblems which indicated the tombs of the martyrs ; and that "Rest in Peace," though primarily meant for the soul, was not without its meaning for the body of the departed. They had but gone to sleep in Christ.

APPENDIX

LIST OF POPES WHO REIGNED DURING THIS PERIOD

THE list contains the names of the Popes who reigned from the time of St Peter to that of St Melchiades (Miltiades), whose happy lot it was to see the Church established in peace by the Edict of Milan, A.D. 313. Owing to the disturbed state of the Church during the days of persecution, the date of accession of a few of the earlier Pontiffs is somewhat doubtful.

	FIRST CENTURY	A.D.
ST. PETER.—After some years spent as Bishop of Antioch, St Peter established his See at Rome, A.D. 42. The Church founded on Peter, as on a Rock, was never to be overturned. The authority given by our Lord to Peter was to descend to his successors, and Peter's See was thus to become the centre of Unity for all time.		42-67
ST. LINUS.—It is said that St Linus, after the example of St Paul, forbade women to enter the church with heads uncovered. He wrote of St Peter, particularly in regard to his conduct concerning Simon Magus ; and it was during his Pontificate that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus (A.D. 70).		67-78
ST CLETUS OR ANACLETUS.—In the Canon of the Mass his name appears immediately after that of St Linus.		78-91
ST CLEMENT I.—He was a disciple of St Peter and his third successor as Bishop of Rome. By some he is thought to be the same Clement whom St Paul men- tions with such loving interest in his Epistle to the Philippians : " Clement and the rest of my fellow- labourers whose names are in the book of life " (iv. 3). While Clement was Bishop of Rome, a violent discussion arose among the Christians of Corinth, some of whom went so far as to set aside their lawful pastors. Although St John the Evan- gelist was still alive (A.D. 96), and within easy reach of Corinth, the faithful of Corinth appealed to Rome to St Clement, who wrote a vigorous epistle to the Corinthians, which, for a long time after his death, continued to be read in many of the churches.		91-100

SECOND CENTURY

A.D.

St EVARISTUS.—Acting, it is said, on Apostolic tradition, this Pontiff ordered that marriages should be celebrated publicly and with the blessing of the Church. 100-109

St ALEXANDER I.—According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, Alexander decreed that blessed water, mingled with salt, be kept at all times in the Church, and sprinkled by the faithful in their homes to put to flight evil spirits. He also decreed that a little water be added to the wine used in the Holy Sacrifice, in memory of the Blood and Water that flowed from our Saviour's pierced side. 109-119

St SIXTUS I.—He was the first to direct that the chalice and paten should be touched only by the sacred ministers. 119-127

St TELESPHORUS.—He is credited by some with having introduced the “*Gloria in Excelsis*” in the Mass. 127-139

St HIGINUS.—He is said to have instituted the *minor orders* of the clergy. 139-142

St PIUS I.—Following the tradition of the Apostles, this Pope decreed that the Resurrection of our Lord be celebrated on no other day but Sunday. He turned into a church the house of Pudens in which St Peter had lodged, and gave it the title of the *Pastor* or the *Shepherd*. Here he was accustomed to offer the Holy Sacrifice; and here, too, he baptised many converts. The church is now known as that of St Pudentiana, sister of St Praxedes, and daughter of the Senator Pudens, and is the titular church of Cardinal Bourne, as it also was of Cardinal Wiseman. 142-157

St ANICETUS.—St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, came to Rome to consult Anicetus particularly on the subject of the celebration of Easter, yet persisted in following the tradition of St John the Evangelist, according to which reckoning the feast of the Resurrection need not necessarily fall on a Sunday. The question was finally settled by the Council of Nice (325). It was at this time that the historian Hegesippus, a converted Jew, came to Rome, where he remained writing his history of the Church. 157-168

St. SOTER.—According to the testimony of St Denis of Corinth, Soter was famed for his generosity in aiding even distant and needy Christians. He wrote a letter to the faithful of Corinth, which, like that of St 168-177

Clement, continued to be read in the Church there on Sundays.

A.D.

St ELEUTHERIUS.—At the request of Lucius, a British prince, Eleutherius sent missionaries into Britain, by whom Lucius himself was baptised, and through whose preaching many of his subjects were brought to embrace the faith. The British Church became modelled on those of Gaul and Italy. Eleutherius also received at Rome St Irenaeus, so warmly recommended to him by the faithful of Lyons. 177-192

St VICTOR I.—This Pope is known for the struggle he maintained against the Eastern Church over the date for the celebration of Easter ; and it was only by the entreaties of St Irenaeus that he was prevented from going to extremes against the bishops of Asia. It was Victor who decided that, in case of necessity, ordinary water might be used in baptism. 192-201

THIRD CENTURY

St ZEPHYRINUS.—It was under this Pope that the famous Origen went to Rome to visit “the first and most celebrated of all the Christian Churches.” 202-218

St CALLISTUS (CALIXTUS).—This Pope ordered the strict observance of the Ember-days of the year : he also established the cemetery named after him on the Appian Way, a cemetery in which some 46 Pontiffs and 174,000 martyrs are said to have been buried. 218-222

St URBAN I.—Valerian, the husband of St Cecilia, virgin and martyr, together with his brother Tiburtius, received baptism at the hands of Urban. Soon afterwards both received the martyr’s crown. 223-230

St PONTIAN.—For his faith, Pontian was banished to Sardinia, where the hardships he had to undergo, and the unhealthy climate, soon ended his life. 230-235

St ANTERUS.—He was Pope only a little more than a month, dying in January, 236. 235-236

St FABIAN.—He suffered martyrdom under Decius, and as the persecution continued to rage even more violently after his death, the Holy See remained unoccupied for well-nigh a year and a half. 236-250

St CORNELIUS.—At the election of Cornelius a schism arose in the Church owing to the action and ambition of Novatian, who even set himself up as Bishop of Rome in opposition to the lawful occupant of that 251-252

See. Novatian is regarded by some as the first antipope. In the Canon of the Mass, the name of Cornelius is followed by that of his friend St Cyprian.

A.D.

ST LUCIUS I.—Having been banished from Rome, Lucius was soon allowed to return, but died after a reign of some eight months. 252–253

ST STEPHEN I.—Stephen will be remembered for his vigorous struggle in favour of the validity of baptism conferred by heretics. In this he met with determined opposition on the part of St Cyprian and the African bishops. A pathetic close was put to the contest by the martyrdom of both champions. 253–257

ST SIXTUS II.—It was Sixtus who, on his way to martyrdom, foretold to St Lawrence that in three days he was to follow him. 257–258

ST DIONYSIUS.—After a vacancy of nearly a year, Dionysius was elected to the vacant See of Rome. He sent alms to redeem the Christian captives of Caesarea in Cappadocia after that city had been surprised and attacked by the Barbarians. With the money he also sent letters of sympathy to the suffering churches there, and his name was ever held in blessing. 259–269

ST FELIX I.—This Pope encouraged and confirmed the custom of celebrating Mass on the tombs of the martyrs. He is also said to have ordered that altars should be consecrated and have the relics of martyrs enclosed in them. 269–274

ST EUTYCHIANUS.—He is said to have debarred all drunkards from approaching Holy Communion till they had completely overcome their vice. 275–283

ST CAIUS.—Caius confirmed the custom by which one aspiring to the episcopate must first pass through the seven lesser orders of the clergy. 283–296

ST MARCELLINUS.—The story of the supposed fall of Marcellinus, in so far yielding to the threats of his persecutors as to offer incense to the gods, and of his appearing as a suppliant before a Council of 300 bishops assembled at Sinuessa, has been shown to be a fable treacherously invented by his enemies the Donatists to blacken the character of the Pontiff and bring about his abdication. It is impossible to conceive how, while the bitterest of all the persecutions was raging, three hundred bishops could thus assemble. The story is denounced by St Augustine as a Donatist plot, the origin of which he ascribes to the Donatist

bishop Petilius. Marcellinus, who is believed to have received the crown of martyrdom during the persecution of Diocletian, was buried in the cemetery of St Priscilla.

EARLY FOURTH CENTURY

A.D.

ST MARCELLUS.—The election of a successor to Marcellinus was prevented for some four years owing to the violence of the Diocletian persecution. At length Marcellus was chosen to fill the vacant See. Soon he was condemned by the tyrant Maxentius to exile, and to serve as a groom in the imperial stables. He succumbed to his sufferings and cruel treatment after a Pontificate of a year and seven months.

ST EUSEBIUS.—The holy Pontiff was banished by the cruel Maxentius into Sicily, where he died after occupying the Chair of Peter for the short period of four months.

ST MELCHIADES.—Melchiades was the first Pope to take up his residence at the Lateran Palace, provided by Constantine as the official residence of the Roman Pontiffs. Churches and all ecclesiastical property confiscated during the persecution were restored, and Melchiades had thus the good fortune to see peace, so ardently longed for, restored to the Church. With this Pontiff ends the first period of Church History ; and a new era opens out when his successor, Sylvester I (314-335), is chosen to fill the Chair of the Fisherman.

END OF THE EARLY PERIOD

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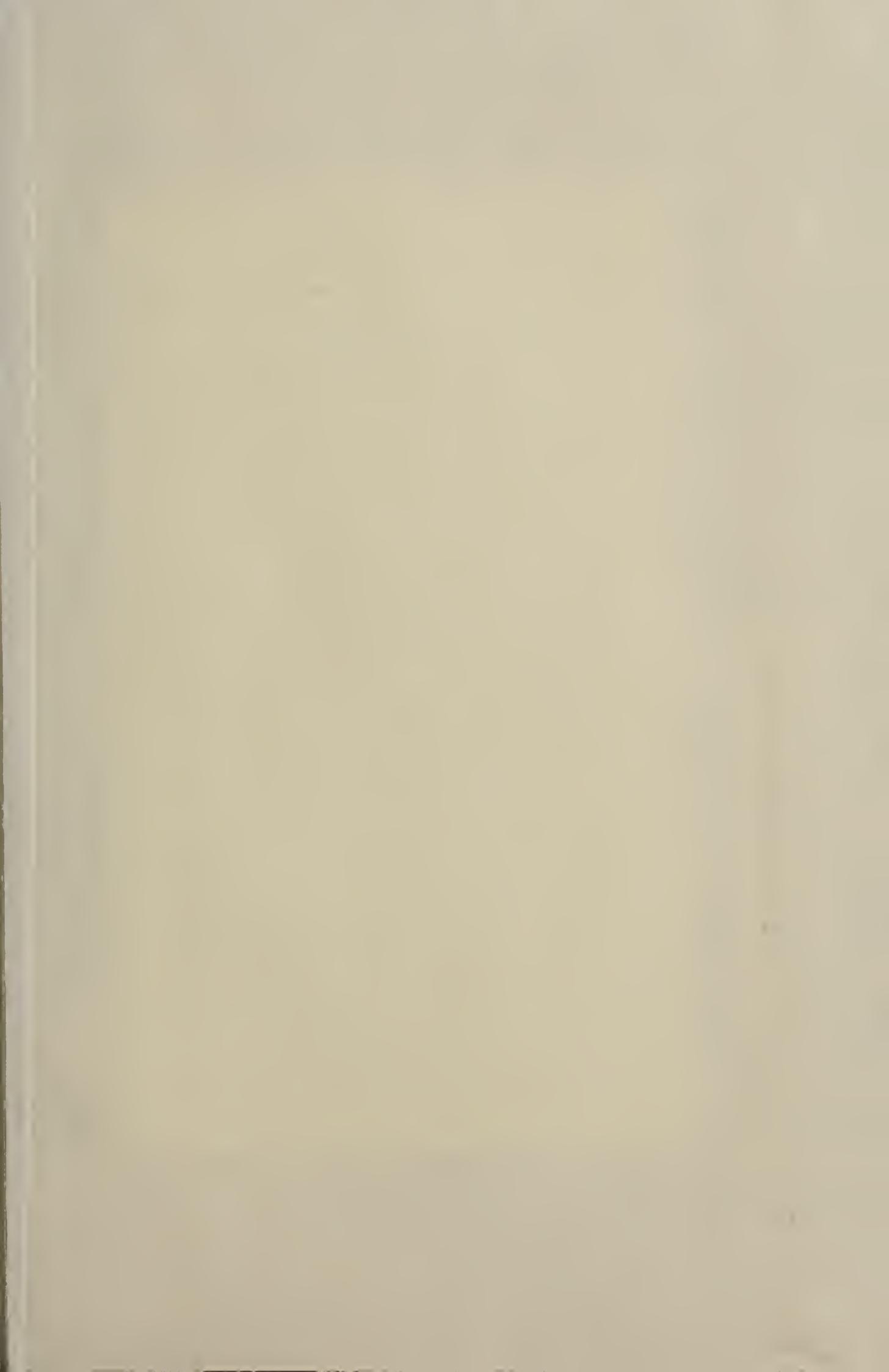
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